



Scope of Practice

Yoga Alliance™'s Scope of Practice (SOP) applies to every Yoga Alliance **Member**. The SOP provides a clear, responsible, and non-lineage-specific description of yoga teaching, practice standards, and professional responsibilities for all Yoga Alliance Members of any kind (now known or unknown), including the Yoga Alliance Registered Yoga **Teacher** (RYT™), Continuing Education Provider (YACEP®), Yoga Teacher Specialist (RCYT™, RPYT™, etc.), and others. The SOP sets out acceptable, recommended, required, and prohibited practices by which Members agree to conduct themselves. The Member must adhere to the SOP while teaching yoga. It is based upon core values intrinsic to the practice of yoga.

The SOP is an integral part of the overall [Ethical Commitment](#) to which a Member must accept, along with [Yoga Alliance's Scope of Practice](#) and all [other Yoga Alliance policies](#).

Terms in **bold** are considered key terms and are defined [here](#).

Purpose

Yoga Alliance™ and the Yoga Alliance Foundation™ envision a world in which access to high quality teaching and practicing of yoga is equitable for all and elevates collective wellbeing and human consciousness. The purpose of the SOP and the overall Ethical Commitment is to foster safe and respectful guidelines for the ***Business of yoga*** and to assure that Yoga Alliance Members maintain a high level of teaching ability and accountability.

By defining and requiring high standards of professional and ethical conduct, Yoga Alliance seeks to promote confidence and respect for Members throughout yoga communities and the public at large. This includes: (a) broadening the public understanding of the role of the Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT™); (b) ensuring and upholding professional behavior within the Yoga Alliance community; (c) developing and encouraging high standards of professional conduct; and (d) promoting and protecting the interests of the profession of yoga teaching and of the Yoga Alliance members we serve.

Preamble

Yoga Alliance’s SOP provides a set of robust standards, policies, and procedures for the profession of yoga teaching. Towards that end, Yoga Alliance recognizes that there are many lineages, styles, and methodologies and believes that the teaching of yoga must respect that diversity. Yoga is a polythetic system¹ of physical, mental, and spiritual practices and disciplines which originated in ancient India and South Asia. Throughout history, various groups in India, and in other cultures, geographies, and religious and secular contexts, have defined and redefined yoga according to the differing circumstances, passions, and goals of diverse individual and cultural traditions. The colonization of India by Great Britain, the globalization of yogic understandings, and a combination of other worldwide cultural exchanges, appropriations, and natural evolutions have also influenced what is defined today as yoga. While acknowledging the limitations of any single definition of yoga—and wholly rejecting the idea that yoga can be reduced to any single framework or understanding—for the purpose of Yoga Alliance standards, the Sanskrit word “yoga” includes and additionally describes both an optimal unitive state of consciousness as well as the techniques, philosophies, practices, and lifestyles that bring one to such a state

Yoga Alliance Members make a commitment to high standards of competency and ethics; this SOP is part of that commitment and provides a non-lineage specific description of yoga teaching for all Members.

This Scope is not intended to limit a licensed healthcare practitioner or certified professional from practicing according to their respective Scopes of Practice.

¹ A Polythetic System is a system in which members of a group relate to or share a number of commonly occurring characteristics, yet none of which is essential for membership of that group or class.

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Guidance for the Scope of Practice

SOP Principle 1 — Follow the [Yoga Alliance™ Code of Conduct](#)

SOP Principle 1 requires Members to follow the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct, which consists of the following eight principles:

1. Adhere to applicable law.
2. Follow the Yoga Alliance Scope of Practice.
3. Follow the [Yoga Alliance Anti-Harassment Policy](#).
4. Follow the [Yoga Alliance Sexual Misconduct Policy](#).
5. Do no harm.
6. Actively include all individuals.
7. Respect Student-Teacher relationships.
8. Maintain honesty in communications.

SOP Principle 2 — Teach Yoga

SOP Principle 2 allows Members to **teach yoga** and to offer instruction and education on yoga practices and principles that responsibly reflect the level of yoga education, training, and experience of both the Members and the [Student\(s\)](#). Members may teach yoga in a group, in a one-on-one setting, or online.

Members must limit teaching to practices and learnings that align with yoga philosophy and the lineage, style, and methodology for which the Member is qualified and in accordance with the competencies described in the [Yoga Alliance Common Core Curriculum Standards](#).

SOP Principle 3 — Adjust Posture or Practice with [Explicit and Informed Consent](#)

SOP Principle 3 allows the Member to **adjust posture or practices only with Explicit and Informed Consent**. All physical adjustments of any type are intentionally limited to situations

where there has been prior Explicit and Informed Consent. Previous consent does not imply future permission or allow for future physical adjustment or contact.

“Explicit and Informed Consent” is narrowly defined as overt permission for a specific Teacher to use hands-on contact that has been granted by the Student. This permission can be given verbally, in writing, by an unambiguous gesture, or via a consent indicator. Silence or lack of resistance, in and of itself, does not demonstrate consent.

SOP Principle 4 — Share and Cite Yogic Philosophy, History, and Anatomy

SOP Principle 4 requires Members to properly cite sources when providing instruction in yogic philosophy, history, and anatomy. This may include teachings, studies, and the Member’s own personal commentary or opinion from many sources, including those listed below. In conformance with the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct, Members must accurately disclose the source of the information, commentary, or opinion.

- a. Yoga texts
- b. The teachings of direct yoga Teachers of the Member
- c. The teachings of specific lineage traditions within a historical or contemporary yoga tradition
- d. The work of degreed scholars of Religious Studies, Indology, Sanskrit, etc.
- e. The work of degreed scholars of Anatomy, Physiology, etc.

SOP Principle 5 — Advise and Teach Within Permitted Scope

SOP Principle 5 **prohibits members from advising or teaching in areas where the Member does not have appropriate credentials and competence.** The goal of Principle 5 is to provide guidance in cases where Members may encounter situations beyond the scope of their credentials, experience, or abilities.

- a. Members must not provide advice or services for which they are not properly and currently licensed, during any program, including residential or immersion. Members may, at their own discretion, provide referral lists of locally available resources for Students, including but not limited to: medical and mental health professionals, law enforcement, suicide prevention hotline, sexual abuse hotline, and Yoga Alliance.
- b. Unless the Member is both competent and properly credentialed in the specific field in which they seek to provide services, advice, or products, the Member must (1) gain competence and proper credentials, (2) engage the services of or refer the Student to a competent and properly credentialed professional, or (3) decline to provide such service or advice.
- c. Yoga Alliance credentials must never be used to imply competency or to promote the Member in fields not specifically included in the Yoga Alliance Scope of Practice.

SOP Principle 6 — Maintain Relevant Credentials

SOP Principle 6 requires Members to **maintain relevant credentials** including compliance with any registration or continuing education requirements. Members must:

- a. **Maintain and comply** with all relevant Yoga Alliance credentials, including all qualifications and corresponding continuing education requirements;
- b. **Agree to follow** all other Yoga Alliance policies and procedures.

Application of the Scope of Practice

This Scope of Practice applies to all Yoga Alliance Members in any context or environment where a Member presents themself (or is presented) as a Teacher, or professional yoga educator (Teacher, Trainer, mentor, or other), including but not limited to: group and private yoga instruction; yoga instruction in ashrams, yoga Schools and yoga teacher trainings, studios, gymnasiums, fitness clubs, other schools and universities, medical facilities, group homes, prisons, public spaces, festivals, retreats; and all online spaces, including social media.

Activities covered by the SOP shall be distinguished from the purely private conduct of Members, which is beyond the purview of this SOP. However, action and behavior that is deemed by Yoga Alliance to be directly related to teaching yoga may fall under this policy at Yoga Alliance's discretion. (For example, if a Teacher meets with a prospective Student in an office prior to a yoga teacher training and violates the SOP, that interaction may be considered part of the professional interaction even though it did not occur in the classroom or training space).

Yoga Alliance Members should be committed to developing strong ethical principles in their professional and personal lives, and this should be understood as intrinsic to their practice and teaching of yoga.

Yoga Alliance reserves the right to investigate allegations of member violations to the SOP regardless of membership status at the time of the incident(s) that gives rise to the allegation.

ATTESTATION AND AGREEMENT

For illustrative purposes only.

Members will **attest to the Scope of Practice** at registration or renewal.

Members are required to adhere to the Yoga Alliance™ Scope of Practice (the SOP). This SOP MUST be agreed to and signed to gain Yoga Alliance Member status. Members MUST review and sign this SOP annually to retain Member status. Yoga Alliance reserves the right to update, modify, or otherwise change this SOP at its sole discretion. All changes will be published to the Yoga Alliance website, and members will be notified via electronic mail.

In the event that a Yoga Alliance policy or procedure conflicts with that of a given yoga School, studio, lineage, style, methodology, tradition, organization, or entity, the policies and procedures of Yoga Alliance will govern its decisions in all instances related to its Members.

I agree to cooperate fully and peacefully with Yoga Alliance and all Yoga Alliance personnel, providing timely and truthful responses and information should a grievance ever be registered about me.

I, MEMBER, DO HEREBY ATTEST AND AGREE to follow all of the elements of the Scope of Practice outlined above and also agree to follow all other Yoga Alliance policies and procedures.

For more information on **Yoga Alliance policies and procedures**, please click [here](#).

I, _____, agree to
(Print Clearly, Legal First Name and Legal Last Name)

all terms of the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct as a condition of my membership and registration with Yoga Alliance. I agree that Yoga Alliance has the authority to review my membership and to suspend, revoke, or otherwise continue or discontinue my membership and/or registration at its sole discretion.

(Signature)

(Date: MM/DD/YYYY)

Definition of Key Terms

Yoga Alliance™ honors the great diversity and variety within the practice of yoga. In the spirit of yoga as union, Yoga Alliance has provided the following definitions to ensure community-wide clarity, consistency, and comprehension of terms used within Yoga Alliance policies and standards, including but not limited to the Yoga Alliance Code of Conduct and Scope of Practice.

Definitions of Key Terms coming soon.

What is Yoga?

While acknowledging the limitations of any single definition of yoga—and wholly rejecting the idea that yoga can be reduced to any single framework or understanding—for the purpose of Yoga Alliance standards, the Sanskrit word “yoga” includes and additionally describes both an optimal unitive state of consciousness as well as the techniques, philosophies, practices, and lifestyles that bring one to such a state.

Yoga is a polythetic system² of physical, mental, and spiritual practices and disciplines which originated in ancient India and South Asia. Throughout history, various groups in India, and in other cultures, geographies, and religious and secular contexts, have defined and redefined yoga according to the differing circumstances, passions, and goals of diverse individual and cultural traditions. The colonization of India by Great Britain, the globalization of yogic understandings, and a combination of other worldwide cultural exchanges, appropriations, and natural evolutions have also influenced what is defined today as yoga.

Yoga Alliance defines yoga techniques, philosophies, lifestyles, and practice as including the following:

- **Asana:** mindful and breath aware postures and movements that may be undertaken for a number of goals including vigor, balance, flexibility, mobility, range of motion, strength, general fitness, and/or preparation for meditation
- **Anatomy, Physiology, and Biomechanics:** essential knowledge for contemporary yoga Teachers that pertains to safe functional movement, yoga posture, breathwork, and meditation
- **Jnana Yoga:** contemplation and application of classical yoga philosophy (Sankhya, Vedanta, Tantra, etc.) and traditional texts (Vedas, Upanishads, Yoga Sutras of Patanjali, Bhagavad Gita, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, etc.) to understand self and the world
- **Bhakti Yoga:** methods for cultivating devotion to God or highest consciousness
- **Karma Yoga:** selfless action or service for the benefit of humanity

² A Polythetic System is a system in which members of a group relate to or share a number of commonly occurring characteristics, yet none of which is essential for membership of that group or class.

- **Raja Yoga:** methods for the pursuit of awakening consciousness, including the Eight Limbs of Yoga as defined by Patanjali (yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi)
- **Kriyā:** body purification practices
- **Bandhas:** defined practices for energy control
- **Cakras, Nādīs Granthis:** practices focused on awareness of the subtle body
- **Mudrā:** hand gestures for mental focus and defined energy movement
- **Mantra:** prayer and/or chanting
- **Sankalpa:** affirmation/intention setting
- **Kīrtana:** sung worship
- **Yoga Nidrā:** yogic sleep and rejuvenation

Visit our [Community Conversations page](#) to learn about the conversation around “What is Yoga?” and ways in which we plan to highlight the fullness of this incredible practice.