

Class Etiquette: The (Semi) Unspoken Rules of Yoga

- meant to provide guidance for those new to yoga and to serve as a friendly reminder to the rest of us -

Arrive early

Tardiness to yoga class is disruptive and disrespectful to the teacher and other students. To avoid being late, aim to arrive 15 minutes before class is scheduled to start; this gives you time to relax, breathe, and settle in.

Turn off your cell

Make a habit of doing this before you step foot into the yoga studio; nothing is more grating than the sound of a ringing cell phone during practice. (And few things are as embarrassing as scrambling to silence your phone in the middle of class!)

Remove your shoes

The studio stays most hygienic if everyone leaves their shoes (yes, even flip-flops) outside the classroom. And pay attention where you're walking barefoot—it's a major no-no to tread on other students' mats.

Talk to the teacher

If you have any injuries (past or current), concerns, talk to the teacher before class. This way, the teacher can recommend variations on certain poses during practice to allow you to reap the benefits without unnecessary strain. Speak up if something doesn't feel right, but don't "hog" the teacher during class; if you have lots of concerns, consider scheduling a private session.

Relish the quiet

A yoga classroom is like a sanctuary—people come here to relax and find peace. Honor this by observing as much quiet as possible: Try not to make distracting sounds (ie, overzealous grunts and groans), and save any chit-chat for after class or the lobby area, and avoid gossip..

Consider hygiene

Sweat is good—it's a sign you're working hard, and a healthy way to cleanse the body of toxins. However, if you're prone to heavy perspiration, bring a towel to class to mop your brow (so you don't drip on your neighbor's mat) and wipe up any excess sweat on or around your mat after class.

Skip the scents

Many people have sensitivities to perfumes and scented body lotions; help us keep our studios fragrance-free by avoiding applying any aromatic products before class. If you're concerned about stink, shower before class and use unscented deodorant.

Keep your belongings outside class

Floorspace in a classroom can be limited, so keep your "footprint" small. Limit the belongings near your mat to the bare essentials: a water bottle, towel, and maybe an additional layer for the relaxation period at the end of class. Leave your coat, purse, keys, cell phone (turned off, of course) duffel bag and whatever else in the designated area outside the classroom.

Wear appropriate clothing

Select clothing based on what type of yoga you'll be doing, the temperature of the room, and what will be most comfortable for the duration of class. Avoid clothing that is too baggy and loose (which can get in your way during certain poses) as well as clothing that is too tight or revealing—no one wants to witness a "wardrobe malfunction" during class!

Excuse yourself quietly

If you must use the restroom during class, it's most polite to wait until a short period of rest like child's pose or between asanas. Excuse yourself quietly, trying not to obstruct other students.

Stay 'til the end

Savasana is a delicious period of relaxation at the end of each yoga class. If you roll up your mat and dash out the door during this quiet time, you're not only annoying your fellow students, you're missing out on what is arguably the most essential part of the practice. Forget about the to-do list that awaits you after class, and allow yourself to really sink in to this incredibly restoring pose. Breathe and remind yourself this is why you're here. You'll be glad you did!