

How to Tell a Good Instructor: Certifications and Signs

Check an instructor's training: Yoga Alliance RYT-200 for yoga, an NPCP certificate or a comprehensive course for Pilates. Then watch how they teach in class.

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Training matters, but it is only part of the answer. Check the credential. Then watch how the teacher teaches. A good instructor is clear, safe and attentive.

Why credentials are not licences

In most countries, no government licence is needed to teach yoga, Pilates, barre, hoop dance or pole. Private bodies, schools and brands set their own standards. A credential tells you what training a teacher reports. It does not guarantee skill.

Yoga

Yoga Alliance is a non-profit registry based in the United States. It lists teachers and schools that meet its standards. Registration is voluntary.

- **RYS:** Registered Yoga School. A school that meets the Yoga Alliance standards.
- **RYT 200:** Registered Yoga Teacher. The teacher has completed a 200-hour training at a registered school.
- **RYT 500:** the teacher has completed a further training, for a total of 500 hours.
- **E-RYT:** Experienced Registered Yoga Teacher. The teacher also has teaching experience.

You can search the registry on the Yoga Alliance website. Many excellent teachers are not registered. Ask what training they have done.

Pilates

Pilates has no single governing body worldwide. These are the main names:

- **National Pilates Certification Program (NPCP):** runs the national certification exam for Pilates teachers in the United States.
- **Pilates Method Alliance (PMA):** a professional association for Pilates teachers.
- **STOTT PILATES:** a training programme from Merrithew. Instructors earn its certificates.
- **Balanced Body:** an equipment maker that also runs teacher training.

Other schools exist too. Ask a Pilates teacher which programme they completed and how many hours it took. A comprehensive course for equipment usually takes many months. A weekend course on one machine is not the same.

Barre, hoop, aerial and pole

These fields have no single worldwide governing body. Some barre brands train and certify their own teachers. Ask what the teacher trained in, and for how long. For aerial arts, also ask about rigging and safety training.

General fitness credentials

Some teachers hold a group fitness certificate from a body such as the American Council on Exercise, the American College of Sports Medicine or the National Academy of Sports Medicine. The National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) is an accrediting body that reviews certification programmes. Ask whether the credential is NCCA-accredited. Many studios also ask teachers to hold current CPR and first-aid training.

Signs of a good teacher in class

- The teacher asks about injuries before class.
- The teacher explains each move clearly and offers options.
- The teacher walks around the room and watches students.
- The teacher corrects with care, and asks before they touch you.
- The teacher never forces you into a pose or move.
- The class has a clear structure: warm-up, main work, cool-down.
- The teacher teaches at the level of the class.
- Students leave safe, not hurt.

Warning signs

- Pushing through pain.
- No questions about injuries.
- Hands-on adjustments with no consent.
- Unsafe set-up in aerial or machine classes.
- Medical claims, such as "this cures back pain".

What to ask the studio

Ask: "Who teaches this class and what is their training?" A good studio answers in a clear sentence. Compare answers across studios with the tools on this site.

Frequently asked questions

What does RYT-200 mean?

It means Registered Yoga Teacher, 200 hours. The teacher has told Yoga Alliance that they finished a 200-hour training at a registered yoga school.

Is a certificate required to teach yoga or Pilates?

In most places, no. Teaching these classes is not licensed by the government. A certificate shows training. It does not guarantee quality.

How do I check a teacher's credential?

Ask the teacher or studio. For Yoga Alliance, search the public registry on its website. For Pilates, ask which school issued the certificate and check with that school.

Sources

[Yoga Alliance](https://www.yogaalliance.org/) — <https://www.yogaalliance.org/>

[Pilates Method Alliance](https://pilatesmethodalliance.org/) — <https://pilatesmethodalliance.org/>

[Merrithew \(STOTT PILATES\)](https://www.merrithew.com/) — <https://www.merrithew.com/>

[Balanced Body](https://www.pilates.com/) — <https://www.pilates.com/>

[National Commission for Certifying Agencies \(NCCA\)](https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/) — <https://www.credentialingexcellence.org/>
Accreditation