

From Sarah Lyon: Pinnacle Pose: We will use side planks as our pinnacle pose

Theme is opening to something bigger.

Poses needed to get to side planks? Discuss and design.

An article: Whether you're designing a sequence for your own home practice or to teach to a yoga class, there are some universal principles to designing your own yoga routines that will ensure a safe, inspired and balanced yoga class. Applied with your passion and inspiration, these principles will help you create an endless variety of blissed out yoga journeys for your students and your own practice.

When designing your own yoga routines, each yoga class should be structured by an arc, anchored by a pinnacle pose, moved by the principle of counter pose and brought to life by your theme and instruction. We'll take each one in turn and give some examples.

Before you start though, you must envision your yoga class. You don't always know ahead of time who will show up, but you may have an idea of who the likely culprits will be, and you'll definitely have a general description. Are they brand new beginners or more seasoned practitioners? Will your yoga class include other teachers? Is the crowd where you teach hip and edgy or older and more settled? This will window the set of poses you choose from in creating the arc of your yoga class.

Theme and pinnacle pose are closely related. Every yoga class should have a theme, but that doesn't mean every theme has to be philosophical or deep. If a Mark Nepo reading or a poem by E.E. Cummings is your style, then bring it. Choose a deeply affecting reading or poem and decide which yoga pose it suggests to you. It doesn't matter if it suggests that to anyone else; you'll bring that out in the course of the yoga class. You do have to reference your theme throughout your yoga class, and not just at the beginning or end. But your theme could equally well be hamstring flexibility or shoulder openers. Your choice depends on your temperament, your audience and even your mood. Even a philosophical yoga teacher might choose an anatomical focus when teaching at a gym or in a corporate setting.

The pinnacle pose is that pose the rest of the class is building towards and falling from. For a backbending or heart opening yoga class, your pinnacle pose may be Camel or Wheel, maybe even Dancer Pose. For a hamstring yoga class, standing hand to foot pose, or Monkey pose. Allow a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 15 minutes at the beginning for opening breath awareness, setting a yoga class theme and warming up. For experienced yogis you may warm up with Sun Salutations, but for beginners or older or younger yogis, or in gentle classes you may begin with simple shoulder rolls, wrist flexing, side bending and cat-cow

poses.

Begin your yoga class with standing postures as these build heat and strength as well as flexibility. Seated postures come towards the end and inversions are at the very end. If you practice a yoga style with finishing postures - a series of 3-10 postures closing each and every yoga class - allow time enough for these. And allow at least 15 minutes for Savasana. You'll need a couple of minutes to lead them into the pose, at least ten percent of the class time should be spent in this final resting pose, and then you'll spend at least five minutes leading them out and closing the yoga class. In between, you build the arc of your yoga class from counter pose.

Counter pose is the principle that each pose has balancing pose following after. Often these are alternating immediately, but you can do up to three of a single type of pose to deepen into the opening before neutralizing the spine with a counter pose. Back and forward bends are the classic counters of one another, so after Cobra, a back bending pose, pause for a breath in Child's pose, a forward fold. Sided poses are their own counters: Warrior I should be done on both sides. It's okay to do a series on one side and then repeat on the other, but never have a yoga class do Warrior III only on the right leg. Twists counter both back and forward bends and Corpse pose, or Savasana is the ultimate neutralizing pose.

When designing your own yoga routines, plan for about three cues, or instructions, for each pose. More can seem overwhelming. Become comfortable with silence between your cues. Use reinforcing words like "Beautiful!" "Good!" "Gorgeous alignment!" freely. I once had a student tell me after years of attending class that she came to my yoga class specifically because I would tell her she was beautiful every day. Practice your yoga class plan before class and then turn yourself over to your passion and to the yoga. Teach from your heart and respond to your students and remember: it's all yoga!

- See more at: <http://lovemyyoga.com/articles/designing-your-own-yoga-routines.html#sthash.gQhzivFn.dpuf>