

Wise Word Choice & Cueing in Yoga Teaching

Mastering Alignment Language for Effective Instruction

Curriculum Overview

Your Presence as the Teacher

- Authenticity, body language & presence
- Sonic components of voice (cadence, tone, energy, volume)
- Wise word choice strategies

Alignment & Adjustments

- Teaching alignment from the inside out
- General principles and choosing cues
- Recognizing problem cues and alternatives

Your Presence as the Teacher

Sonic Components

Master the sound elements of your teaching voice: cadence, tone, energy, and volume to maximize effectiveness.

Wise Word Choice

Be aware and skilled in specific strategies for effectively choosing words while teaching.

The Challenge of Cueing

No alignment teaching will work for all students

- Individual bodies and skeletal structures differ
- What works for one student may not suit another
- Continuous observation and adaptation are essential
 - Clarity is always the first consideration

Why Common Cues Can Be Problematic

"Drop" Your Body Part?

Using "drop" for knees, shoulders, or hips lacks awareness. Consider gentler alternatives: "lower," "soften," or "release."

"Shoulder Blades Down"

When arms are overhead, shoulder blades naturally elevate. Forcing them down can pinch the shoulder joint and thrust ribs forward.

Making Informed Teaching Choices

Hypothesize what prevents the action:

Skeletal

Offer variations to achieve similar effects

Muscular

Consider poses for release and balance

Awareness

Bring attention to breath and sensation

Technique

Use variations and workshop teaching

Cueing Precise Actions vs. Vague Terms

Research shows: Clear action cues are more effective than vague engagement terms

Less Effective

- Engage your glutes
- Turn on your core
- Contract muscles

More Effective

- Drive knees forward, drag heels back
- Press hands away from shoulders
- Lengthen spine toward ceiling

Isometric & Energetic Actions

Using "As If" Language

Teach action without movement by pairing precise instructions with "as if" scenarios.

"Squeeze the block between your hands as if you were trying to crush it"

This bridges the gap between action-based cues and energetic awareness, making subtle isometric contractions accessible to students.

Multiple Methods for Cueing

Expand your cueing repertoire:

Anatomical

"Rotate your femur externally"

Energy-Based

"Radiate from your heart outward"

Feeling-Based

"Notice where you feel sensation"

Props

Press palms into wall for feedback

Self-Inquiry

"What are you feeling right now?"

Breath-Connected

Link movement to breath rhythm

Key Takeaways

- Observe students continuously and adapt your cues based on their responses
 - Prefer precise action cues over vague engagement terms
 - Develop multiple methods to describe the same action
- Guide students toward internal sensation and breath awareness
 - Remember: you're teaching people, not poses

"The most masterful teachers speak the language of sensation most clearly and vividly"