

I Tried Aqua Yoga And Here's What Happened

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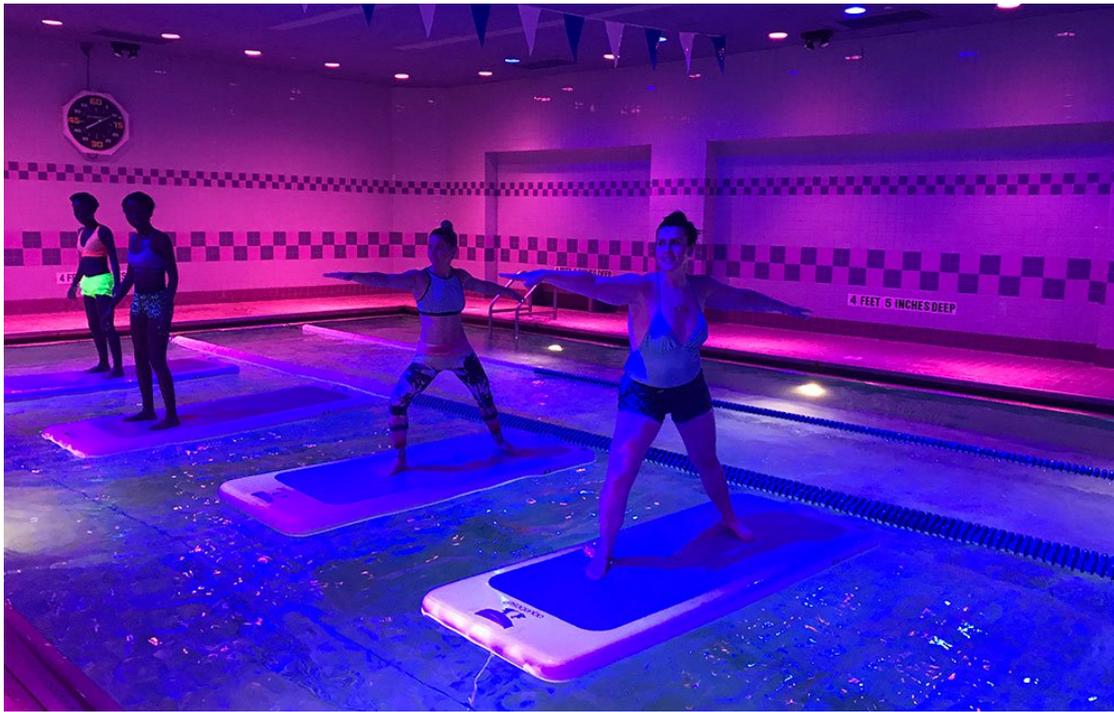
(Get long and lean with sexy Flat Belly Yoga.)

“The class helps to tone the entire body and works on flexibility, coordination and balance,” TMPL instructor Kirra Michel, CPT, explained. “There’s also the mental aspect of being present while practicing something out of your comfort zone.” I was definitely about to be pushed out of mine.

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After arriving at TMPL and signing in, I changed into a two-piece swimsuit and donned a pair of Roxy leggings that are designed to be worn in water. (I worried that a one-piece might be constraining during certain poses.) I had recently experimented with aqua cycling, and I assumed aqua yoga would be easier. I picked a mat near one end, crawled into the water, and tried to hop up onto my mat per the instructor’s directions—but it wasn’t quite so easy after all.

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Photograph courtesy of Amy Schlinger

Even just trying to haul myself onto the mat took some serious work (three tries to be exact!); climbing onto a surface that's bobbing on the water requires more coordination than stepping onto a mat in a studio. There were seven of us in the class lined up on mats down one side of the lap pool: a mix of men and women, a couple of beginners, and a few who took the class every week. Our teacher stayed on the (dry) ground in front of us facing the pool.

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Class began with us on our knees. Our instructor explained that we were going to move through different positions and poses and for everyone to take it at their own pace. And that's exactly what you have to do, because it turns out that even holding a plank or getting into Downward Dog without falling into the water is *way* harder than you could imagine.

Doing yoga on a mat suspended on water creates a lot of instability, so it makes sense that sequences of moves that you may normally be able to flow through on land are not quite so simple on a floating mat. In order to find literal balance, we moved slowly, and some of the poses were modified with a wider or more staggered stance. ([Does yoga qualify as cardio?](#))

We did a series of standing poses, like Warrior I, lunges, and even Chair Pose. I noticed pretty quickly how much I needed to utilize my core and focus my mind and attention in order to hold these positions and not fall into the water. (There were some close calls though!)

Meanwhile, there was a second lane in the pool behind us that was being used by other gym-goers swimming laps. They weren't annoyingly loud or purposefully disturbing, but in a class that requires so much concentration and balance, it was a bit hard not to find them distracting. Maybe once you're more familiar with the class and comfortable with the moves you'd notice them less. (Try these [6 super fun pool workouts that aren't swimming.](#))



Photograph courtesy of Amy Schlinger

Next, the instructor had us do some fun exercises using the water as a tool to activate our muscles. Every other person held a plank while those left standing took a wide stance on the mat, squatted down slightly, and rocked right then left to create some waves in the pool. The goal was to challenge those in a plank not to fall, but even if you were a "wave maker," it was hard to stay balanced. While this wasn't typical yoga, it helped to get our hearts pumping a bit faster and most of us were laughing.

Here's how to do the perfect plank:

While I managed to stay afloat the whole class, there were a couple of students who fell in, including some who had taken the class before. But it was no big deal... they got right back onto their mats. And I have to admit that once a few people fell in, everyone relaxed a little more and all the pressure I was putting on myself to stay on the mat went out the window.

Sometimes, says Michel, falling in is actually a good thing: "Yoga tends to be so serious," she says. "But once you fall in, you lose the nerves, you start to enjoy the class more, and you keep pushing yourself and sometimes even surprise yourself with what you're capable of."

MORE: [I Did 10 Minutes Of Yoga Every Day For A Month, And This Is What Happened](#)

We finished up with some seated poses, ending in Savasana as most yoga practices do. While I gently closed my eyes, I realized that the class had been slower than other yoga classes I'd taken, yet my entire core and many of the tiny muscles throughout my arms and

legs were activated almost the entire time because of the instability of being on water. And while I didn't attain what I'd call a meditative state at any point, my mind really didn't wander at all, mostly because it couldn't: I had to be focused and present in order to stay on the mat.

Is this a class I would take all the time? Probably not, but it is one I'd love to take maybe once every week or two to break up my routine and reset myself. In today's world it's so easy to get distracted thanks to technology and things like social media, and I often find myself not being completely present. During the 45 minutes of this class, I was fully there, in body and mind, and I enjoyed that.