

5 Signs You Need a New Yoga Mat

By Diana Truong

I named my first yoga mat Greenley. She was thin and durable, in a gorgeous olive shade and with just the right amount of stickiness. Greenley was my constant companion as I was practicing yoga at least three times a week, a poor university student making the most out of her unlimited monthly yoga membership. At the end of six months, my yoga asanas had improved tremendously, but Greenley did not share a similar fate. Although I was in denial for a few weeks, I could no longer ignore the signs. Greenley had taken a turn for the worst, and it was time to put her down.

Even with the proper care, yoga mats aren't meant to last forever. Read the following five signs to determine whether or not you need to vinyasa on a new mat.

Unremovable Odor

Your mat smells bad. Even after you deep-cleaned it, your mat has the lingering odor of twelve high school wrestlers who just finished practice. For everyone's sake, get a new mat.

Less Sticky, More Slippery

Over time, yoga mats will naturally lose its stickiness. Excess sweat from Bikram or hot yoga requires extra sticky mats (or a microfiber yoga mat towel), else holding a downward dog will feel unnecessarily like hanging onto a cliff by the tips of your fingers. Make it easy on yourself and get a newer, stickier mat.

Hand Prints

Greenley was undoubtedly mine. At the end of her life, there were clear indentations into the rubber where my hands would naturally go as I jumped from a forward fold into plank. Greenley had my body configurations stamped on her. Although I loved that she was so clearly mine, I didn't love that my joints ached from the lack of cushion where I needed it most. Time to get a mat with the padding that I needed.

Bald Spots

More likely to occur with yoga mats made of open cell design, finger and toenails can catch in the plastic material and tear it out in chunks. These mats will also naturally shed its plastic, so it looks a bit furry. Animals should be furry, yoga mats should not.

Sitting Out on Asanas

If you are practicing an asana with proper technique and alignment, but are experiencing strain on your knees, ankles, elbows, or wrists – to the point that you have to sit out on the pose – then you need a new mat.

Because Greenley was such a huge part of my life, I couldn't just throw her in the rubbish bin and call it a day. Instead, I cut her into rounds and used her as coasters. You could also repurpose yoga mats into drawer liners, beer koozies, seat cushions, jar openers, bulletin boards and placemats. The possibilities are endless! However, if your mat has fallen victim to "unremovable odor," you might just want to toss that baby out.