

# The LA Guide to Everything You Wanted to Learn

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While the stereotype exists that everyone moves to Los Angeles to become an actor/writer/producer/director, the one really awesome thing about our influx of creative geniuses is that you can take classes with those talented people. I say take full advantage of the plethora of knowledgeable, artsy folks that populate Tinsel Town. You can take classes in everything from learning to sew your own dress to complicated choreography from accomplished dancers. Here's what LA has to offer:



## Spork Foods

Jenny Engel and Heather Goldberg are super adorable sisters who teach you how to prepare delicious vegan food, and then afterward, you get to sit down to a nice four-course meal in their stunning West Hollywood studio location. Not too shabby. Emily Deschanel is a fan. Expect classes like Pizza and Beer Party Class or Fall French Cuisine.

## Sew LA

This cutesy Atwater Village sewing studio offers in-person classes for beginners and experienced sewers. Make your own tote bags, skirts, pillow covers, blouses, dresses, and more. The instructors, staff, and owners are all very knowledgeable, so you can count on their helpful expertise when you accidentally sew crooked.

## Blanks Studios

Billy Blanks Jr. (son of Tae Bo creator Billy Blanks) and his wife Sharon Catherine Blanks teach cardio dance classes, incorporating everything from Bollywood to hip hop, even Bob Fosse choreography. I've taken this class since it was first at 24 Hour Fitness, but the Blanks created their own studio in Sherman Oaks that's always the ultimate dance party. Honestly, it doesn't even feel like working out.

## Writing Pad

Take writing classes from talented industry folks like playwright and *Mad Men* writer Jason Grote, learn how to craft a YA novel, or draft the perfect personal essay. Writing Pad even offers online and streaming classes, if you're too lazy to drive to the east or west side locations (or traffic is too nuts).

If you're someone who really, really wants to write, but doesn't know where to begin, I highly recommend fiction writing classes with [Claudette Sutherland](#), who teaches writing workshops for newbies in her beautiful Sherman Oaks home.

## Barnsdall Arts Center

This affordable art center offers everything a budding artist would want: black-and-white photography, watercolor, stained glass, even ukulele lessons. Every Sunday, the center offers free family art classes — you and your kiddos can learn how to make tribal shields, lanterns, or paintings with all the materials provided.

## Burbank Tennis Center

For your inner jock, there are inexpensive tennis classes at the Burbank Tennis Center with clay and hard courts. Based on your skill level, ranging from very beginner to advanced, you can take nine weeks of classes for about \$70 or less. Kinda the best deal ever. Plus, Round Robin Socials on Saturdays offer you a chance to show off your skills.

## Diana Castle's The Imagined Life acting classes

I've only ever taken one acting class, and that was at NYU and was part of graduation requirement. My actress friend Bernadette says all of her friends swear by Diana Castle's acting classes. Actor Tony Hale of *Veep* and *Arrested Development* fame was one of her students and calls her a "gifted teacher and coach." Rapper Common says, "She not only inspires the fun in the art, but in the process you also become a better person."

## LACMA9 Art + Film Lab

I adore LACMA. The epicenter of modern art always rotates exhibits so you can expect to see some pretty amazing art from James Turrell's light installations to Japanese samurai outfits (Psst ... LA residents get free admission after 3 p.m. on weekdays). These folks know a thing or two about art, so I trust that the film lab is equally impressive. Free film composition workshops and mini-documentary class are offered off-site at East Los Angeles College, or make your own movie in Steinmetz Park, Hacienda Heights. All equipment and tools are provided, but the creative vision is all yours.

## Naam Yoga

This yoga studio, blocks from the beach, is the real deal. I took this special event [IntenSati](#) cardio class (picture yoga class + affirmations + getting your butt kicked) in the main room. By main room, I mean, a 2,700 square feet, sun-drenched studio with tall ceilings that can fit 310 people. Not your average yoga studio. The lounge is part tea room and part hang out space with free WiFi and a zen-like atmosphere. If I didn't live 3 million miles away from Santa Monica, this would be my regular yoga studio.

## UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center

I took my first meditation classes in a hospital church in Berkeley, after hitting a bad bout of stress at work. I could barely sit still for ten minutes at first, but the end of my 12 week course, I did an all-day silent retreat from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. A scientist helped develop UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center. The center offers free online guided meditations, introductory classes, six-week intensives, and daylong retreats.

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*Top image from Sew LA*