



## Yoga Playgrounds Yoga and Mindfulness in the Preschool Classroom



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## **Yoga Playgrounds**

Yoga Playgrounds is Portland, Oregon's premier school based kids yoga program, offering yoga classes on site at schools for preschool through middle school students before, during and after the school day. We also offer summer camps, trainings, professional development workshops and resources for parents and teachers who are interested in learning more about yoga and mindfulness for kids.

A Yoga Playgrounds class for kids combines individual and group poses, breathing exercises, mindfulness activities and creative relaxation techniques to promote strength, resiliency, awareness, self regulation and positivity. We keep our classes for kids fun, engaging and age appropriate by weaving in games, stories, music, props and lots of creativity. We seek to inspire kids to enjoy yoga and mindfulness, and we strive to provide them with a variety of useful tools they can take away, revisit and use throughout their lives in school and in their relationships and with themselves.

Yoga Playgrounds was formed in 2010 by Leslie Wilda. Leslie holds multiple certifications in yoga and mindfulness and has been teaching these practices to kids for nearly 15 years. Over the years she has taught thousands of classes to thousands of kids and continues to brainstorm to develop and create new poses, games, activities and other ways to keep kids engaged, learning and having fun. She has been training adults since 2016 and is known for her fun and playful style of teaching and training.

This training course provides participants with lots of techniques and ideas to introduce and share yoga and mindfulness with kids in their classrooms using yoga poses, partner poses, group poses, games, activities, songs, props, stories, breathing exercises, creative visualizations, relaxation techniques and much more!

## Introduction to Kids Yoga

There are many benefits of kids yoga. A Google search will result in more than 67 million pages of results. Here are just a few.

**Yoga helps improve cognitive function.** This happens by creating focus within. In a kids yoga class they are asked to pay attention to the movement of their bodies and how their breath coordinates with those movements. When kids practice yoga they are essentially practicing their ability to focus on the task at hand. In their day-to-day lives this translates to better focus and concentration at school and can lead to improved academic achievement.

**Yoga improves self-regulation.** Self-regulation is the ability to recognize and change our behavior, thoughts and emotions based on the current situation. Self-regulation skills help kids solve problems and adjust to new challenges as well as help them calm down when they are feeling sad, anxious or upset. Practicing yoga helps kids to understand and manage their emotions by paying attention to their minds and their bodies. The simple act of noticing and slowing down the breath can have an enormously calming effect on kids.

**Yoga improves social relationships.** Kids yoga is not like an adult yoga class where one might not have any conversation with anyone before, during or even after the class. For kids, the entire practice of yoga is a social activity. A kids yoga class includes music, songs, games, props, partner poses, and other fun activities. This gets kids moving and breathing together, laughing and interacting with one another. This creates a positive and uplifting environment where kids are having fun and making connections.

**Yoga helps increase self-esteem and self-confidence.** When kids are happy and feeling good, their happiness will spill out of them onto others.

**Yoga improves sleep.** Getting the body moving during the day or before bedtime is an excellent way to improve sleep. When we are stressed or overwhelmed, our bodies are tense and our minds are full, reducing our ability to sleep well. This is also true for kids. We tend to think that kids have it easy, that they don't have anything to feel stressed about, but this isn't true. Practicing yoga helps kids to relieve stress by learning to use their breath to calm their mind and their nervous system. Yoga also helps to relieve tension and negative emotions held physically in the body, helping kids fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.

**Yoga improves strength and flexibility.** Yoga can improve physical strength by teaching kids to use all of their muscles in new ways, whether poses are done standing, sitting or lying down. Each one can challenge different muscle groups while helping kids become aware of their bodies and how they move in various ways.

**Yoga improves balance and coordination.** Balancing poses promote mental and physical poise. Even if a child has difficulty standing on one foot they are learning physical balance from the effort of trying the pose, and they also learn mental clarity if they can stay calm when they fall and when they try to get up again. As kids learn to improve their physical balance, which they will all eventually do, they will be filled with a sense of accomplishment.

**Yoga improves posture.** A combination of body awareness, stretching and practicing poses as well as building confidence all work together to improve posture. Improved posture also helps kids sit more comfortably at their desks in school for longer periods of time, which enhances learning.

**Yoga teaches good values.** Yoga introduces important values like kindness, truthfulness, gratitude, teamwork, respect and many others. These values improve the overall well being of kids and creates a culture of kindness and inclusion.

**How to explain yoga to kids?** Here are some kid friendly ways of explaining yoga to kids.

A long time ago in India people would observe the natural world around them and recreate what they saw with their bodies. I see a tree I will become a tree, they thought. They noticed how good it made them feel and how strong and flexible their bodies became.

You can also tell kids that practicing yoga is a way of exercising their body and their mind at the same time.

And of course the most simple explanation is that yoga is stretching, bending, balancing, breathing, moving and relaxing. It's also exercise. Yoga makes you feel good.

## How to Make Kids Yoga Poses

Yoga poses are the foundation of kids yoga. Knowing them allows you to add movement to your school day, practice poses during storytime, plan an entire 30-45 minute yoga class around a theme, or adapt favorite books and movies into yoga adventures.

Yoga poses for kids are versions of classical adult yoga poses that have been adapted especially for them. The poses will almost always take their names from animals, objects and nature. That's what makes yoga so much fun for kids.

The pose names in this manual were created to inspire teachers and make the practice of yoga more fun for both the kids and the teachers. They are interchangeable. For example, you can turn a fox pose into a bear pose, or a gorilla pose into a monkey pose.

If you are taking a trip to the beach in your yoga and want to do the superhero pose, you can call it a swimming pose. If you are in the jungle and want to do a cougar, tiger, and leopard pose, which are all represented as the same pose in this manual, simply choose another pose in the manual and give it a new name. If kids ask you to show them a pose that corresponds with something not found in this manual, like a koala bear, for example, you can ask them, "What do you think a koala bear pose looks like?" and use their suggestions. You can also make up your own names for poses, or just ask Google!

Remember too that kids vocalize when they move, so your role as a kids yoga teacher is to step back and allow the kids to bark when they are in dog pose, to hiss when they are in snake pose and to meow when they are stretching their backs like a cat. Sound is a great stress release for kids, it makes yoga more fun, and it adds an auditory dimension to the physical experience of yoga.

Kids will want to imitate the movements of the animals as well. When kids stretch like a dog, balance like a flamingo, breathe like a bunny, or stand strong and tall like a tree, they are making a connection between the environment, things that exist in their real lives, and their bodies.

As you instruct kids to come into the poses of different animals, objects, or things found in nature, you can tap into their natural creativity to deepen their awareness and experience. When kids are in snake pose, invite them to imagine what kind of snake they would be. Perhaps they would be a king cobra. Or maybe they are a green grass snake creeping silently in their neighbor's backyard. In tree pose, you can ask kids to imagine being a giant oak tree, with roots growing out the bottoms of their feet. Could they stay in the same position for 100 years like a real tree?

It is important to always encourage rather than correct, which will create a safe space for kids to experiment with different poses and movements. One of the most important things a kids yoga teacher can do is encourage and praise the effort and willingness of kids to try new poses and to move in new ways. There is no right or wrong way to move in yoga, and doing a pose “correctly” is not the goal of yoga. Alignment is not important when working with young kids.

Kids love discovering new ways to move their bodies and creating new yoga poses, so allow them to be as creative as they want. Guide them in yoga poses while at the same time allowing them to guide you. If you choose to join them, the teaching and the learning process will be reciprocal and will provide an opportunity for everyone to create, express themselves, learn, and have fun.

In kids yoga anything goes, so be flexible (pun intended) and creative and have fun!

## Animal Poses



### Camel

Begin kneeling, and place your hands on your lower back with your fingers pointing down. Lean back, and bring your hands down to grab your heels, one at a time.



### Cat/Sheep

On your hands and knees, round your back, look between your knees.



### Chicken

Come into a squat on your toes, place your hands on your shoulders and lift your elbows (your chicken wings) up and down. Can you do a chicken walk?



### Cow

On your hands and knees, push your belly down, arch your back and look up to the sky.



### Coyote

Sit on your heels with your knees wide apart. Place your hands on the ground in front of you, with your fingers pointing toward you. Howl at the moon.



### Deer/Reindeer/Low Lunge

Starting on your knees, step one foot forward. Stretch your back leg out behind you on the ground. Bring your hands up to your head with thumbs interlaced or reach your arms up to the sky and spread your fingers wide to make antlers.



### **Downward Dog**

Begin on your hands and knees. Spread your palms, tuck your toes under and lift your knees, pushing your hips to the sky and forming an upside down “v” shape. Lift one leg and wag your dog tail. Be a dancing dog and jump your feet up, one at a time or both together.



### **Donkey**

Come into downward dog pose and kick both legs up in the air at the same time.

### **Elephant**

Stand with your feet wide apart and make your trunk by clasping your hands together. Lean forward and swing your trunk from side to side.



### **Fox/Squirrel**

Start on your hands and knees. Lift one leg (your tail) to the sky, bending at the knee and pointing your toes to the sky.



### **Giraffe/Walking Stick**

Stand tall and reach both arms up to the sky, making a long neck. Your fingers are your giraffe mouth. Walk with straight legs, kicking up one at a time.



### **Gorilla**

Stand with your feet wide apart and your knees slightly bent. Let your knuckles drag on the floor as you walk or sway from side to side. Take a deep breath and pound your chest on your exhale, making a loud sound.



### **Horse**

Stand with your feet wide apart and turn your toes out to the side. Bend your knees and place your hands on your knees or out and up like cactus arms.



### **Kangaroo**

Stand tall and slowly bend your knees as if you are sitting in a chair. Bend your elbows and hold your kangaroo hands close in front of your chest. Hop.



### **Lion**

Sit on your heels. Hold up your lion paws (your hands). Sit tall and breathe in. As you breathe out, open your lion paws and let out a big roar or a baby lion whisper roar.



### **Monkey**

Jump your legs out wide and bend your knees. As you straighten your legs, swing your arms to one side. Bend your knees and swing your arms down, then straighten your legs as you swing your arms through to the other side. Repeat this movement several times, swinging your arms back and forth in a smooth motion.



### **Moose/High Lunge**

From downward dog, step one foot forward between your hands. Keep that front knee bent as you lift your arms to the sky.





### **Mouse/Rock/Beetle/ Hedgehog/Child's Pose**

Sit on your heels, bend forward over your thighs and place your forehead on the ground. Let your arms rest by your sides with your palms up, stretched out in front of you, or tucked under your forehead.



### **Opossum**

Lie on your back and stretch your legs up to the sky.



### **Pig**

Lie on your back and hug your knees into your chest. Roll from side to side like you are rolling in the mud. Oink!



### **Puppy**

From your hands and knees, walk your hands forward, keeping your bottom lifted, and lower your upper body toward the ground. Keep your arms straight, and rest your forehead on the ground.



### **Rabbit/Bunny**

Sit on your heels and lace your fingers together behind your back. Lift your rabbit ears (your arms) to the sky as you lean forward and gently rest the top of your head on the ground in front of your knees.



### **Raccoon**

Starting on your knees, step one foot forward. Stretch your back leg out behind you on the ground. Make circles around your eyes with your hands.



### **Rhinoceros/Warrior 1**

From standing, take a step forward with one foot and turn your back foot slightly away from you. Keep your hips facing forward as you bend your front knee and reach your arms to the sky. Place your palms together on your forehead for a rhinoceros horn. Be a boxer by making fists and punching the air in front of you.



### **Tiger/Leopard/Cougar/Jaguar**

On your hands and knees, reach one arm forward like you are getting ready to pounce. Stretch your opposite leg back and balance on one hand and opposite knee.



### **Tiger Holding Its Tail**

From your hands and knees, lift one knee off the ground and reach around with your opposite hand to grab that foot.



### **Unicorn/High Lunge With a Twist**

From downward dog, step one foot forward between your hands. Keep your front knee bent, keep your hand on the ground next to your inner foot, and slowly twist your body to the side as you lift your other arm up to the sky.



### **Wolf**

Kneeling, reach your arms up to the sky.



### **Zebra/Peaceful Warrior**

Begin in warrior 2. Lower your back arm down your back leg. Bring your front arm up and overhead, with your palm facing down. You can make half circle motions with your upper arm as if you are painting on your stripes.

## Sea Creature Poses



### Clam/Oyster

Sit down and bring the bottoms of your feet together. Bring your head down toward your feet to make your clam shell.



### Crab/Table

Sit on your bottom with your feet on the floor, your knees bent, and your hands on the floor behind you. Lift your bottom. You can crab walk side to side, forward and backward. You can give high fives to your crab friends - with your feet of course!



### Fish

Sitting on your bottom, stretch your legs out in front of you and lean back on your elbows. Pop out your chest and make a fish face.



### Jellyfish

Lie on your back and lift your arms and legs up in the air and move them around like you are swimming through the water.



### Lobster

Lie on your belly and bend your knees. Keep your feet together and point your toes up. Rest on your elbows and lift your forearms and pincers (hands).



### Mermaid

Start by sitting on your heels with your knees together, and slowly slide your bottom off to the ground on one side. Place your hands on the ground next to your hip and twist away from your legs to look behind you.



### **Octopus**

Sit on your bottom and lift your arms and legs in the air. Wave them around while balancing on your bottom.



### **Seal**

Lie on your back and lift your arms and legs in the air, bending your knees. Clap your hands, knees and feet together.



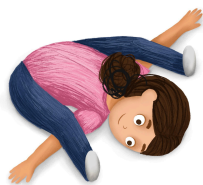
### **Shark**

Lie on your belly and clasp your hands behind your back. Lift your chest, shoulders and hands (your shark fin).



### **Starfish**

Lie on your back and spread your arms and legs wide.



### **Turtle**

Sitting tall, open your legs wide and plant your feet on the ground. Place your hands in between your legs, then walk your fingers underneath your knees as far out as you can, bringing your upper body down between your legs. Hide in your turtle shell. Slowly peek your head out, then hide back in your shell.



### **Whale/Pineapple**

Standing, bring your heels together, toes pointing out, and bend at the knees. Interlace your thumbs and spread your fingers wide. Place the base of your hands on top of your head.

## Amphibian Poses



### Alligator

Lie on your belly and stretch your arms out in front of you. Bring your palms together and roll on to your side. Stretch your arms apart, as if opening your alligator mouth, then snap them shut.



### Alligator

Lie on your side, your arms long over your head. Raise your top leg up to open and close your alligator mouth.



### Crocodile/Plank

Hold the top of a push up.



### Dinosaur/Deer/Low Lunge

Starting on your knees, step one foot forward. Stretch your back leg out behind you on the ground. Bring your hands up to your head with thumbs interlaced or reach your arms up to the sky.



### Frog

Come into a squat and place your elbows on the inside of your knees. Place your hands on the ground for balance or place them together at your heart. Jump high and say ribbit. Be sure to catch a fly on your tongue.



### Friendly Frog

From frog pose, lift one arm up and wave.



### **Salamander**

From plank pose, lower to your forearms. Lift one foot off the ground.



### **Snake/Cobra**

Lie on your belly and place your hands on the ground under your shoulders with your elbows bent. Push down on your hands and lift your chest and shoulders off the ground and hiss. Be a rattlesnake by bending your knees and tapping them against the ground, or put a shaker between your feet.



### **Lizard**

Starting on your knees, step one foot forward. Stretch your back leg out behind you, keeping your knee off the ground. Walk your front foot off to the side and place both hands down on the ground inside of your front foot. You can also lower your forearms to the ground for a bigger stretch. Stick out your lizard tongue and try to catch a fly.

## Bird Poses



### Bat

Stand with your feet wide apart, and reach your hands down to the ground like a bat hanging upside down. Look between your legs at your bat friends.



### Friendly Bat

In bat pose, lift one arm, and then the other, and wave at your bat friends.



### Baby Bird/Bee

Sit on your bottom in criss-cross. Place your hands on your shoulders and lift and lower your elbows (wings).



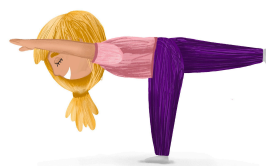
### Bird

Sit on your bottom in criss-cross. Stretch your wings (your arms) out to the side and lift and lower to fly.



### Crow

Come into a squat, and place your hands on the ground in front of you. Lift your bottom, bend your elbows, and walk your feet forward to rest your knees against your triceps. Look forward, lean forward, and slowly lift one foot and then the other off the ground.



### Crane/Airplane/Warrior 3

Standing tall, lift one foot off the ground and stretch that leg behind you. Reach your arms out in front of you, then out to the sides, and balance on one foot



### **Eagle**

Stand tall with your feet together. Hold your arms straight out in front of you, cross one elbow over the other in the shape of an x, bend your arms toward your body and clasp your hands. Bend your knees slightly and wrap one foot around the other. Be a baby eagle sitting in your nest by sitting on your heels and keeping your arms twisted. Lie on your back and for some extra core work bring your twisted elbows and knees together.



### **Duck/Chicken**

Come into a squat on your toes, place your hands on your shoulders and lift your elbows (your wings) up and down. Can you do a chicken walk?

### **Flamingo/Stork/Clothesline**

Stand tall and reach your arms out to the side. Slowly lift one knee and balance on one foot. Swing your foot like clothes hanging on a clothesline.



### **Hummingbird**

Stand tall and reach your arms (wings) up to the sky as you look up.

### **Ostrich/Pyramid**

Standing with your feet slightly apart, take a comfortable step forward with one foot. Reach your arms up to the sky, bend at the waist and slowly fold your body forward over your front leg.





### **Owl**

Sit on your heels and puff out your owl chest. Put both hands on one hip, twist to the side, and softly say “hoo hoo”.



### **Peacock/Ocean Waves/Scissors**

Lie back on your elbows and lift your feet toward the ceiling. Open and close your peacock feathers (your legs).



### **Penguin**

Stand tall with your heels together and your toes pointed out. Keep your arms straight down by your sides with your wrists turned in and your fingers pointed out. Waddle from side to side like a penguin.



### **Pigeon**

From downward dog pose, bring your right knee up behind your right wrist, let your leg rest on the ground, and turn your right foot slightly in. Stretch your other leg out behind you on the ground. Face your hips forward. You can also come into this pose from criss cross, and swing your top leg around behind you and stretch it out along the ground.



### **Roadrunner/Low Lunge**

From downward dog, step one foot up between your hands, keeping that knee bent. Create a straight line from the top of your head all the way down to the back of your heel. Then jump and switch your feet.



### **Swan**

Lie on your belly and place your hands on the ground under your shoulders. Lift your upper body off the ground, bend your knees, and reach your head and feet toward each other. Very flexible kids may be able to “put their sunglasses on” by covering their eyes with their feet.

## Insect Poses



### Ant/Table

Come on to your hands and knees.



### Bee/Baby Bird

Sit on your bottom in criss-cross. Place your hands on your shoulders and lift and lower your elbows (your wings).



### Butterfly

Sit down and bring the bottoms of your feet together. Bring your fingers to either side of your head for antennae. Flap your wings (your knees) up and down. Stretch one leg out at a time to peek under your wing and see what color it is. Stretch both legs out at the same time for a balancing pose.



### Sleeping Butterfly

Sit on your bottom and bring the bottoms of your feet together for butterfly. Bring your nose to your toes to take a rest.



### Caterpillar/Plank

Hold the top of a push up.



### **Cricket**

Sit down and lift your arms and legs, balancing on your bottom. Cross one arm over the other, and one leg over the other, and slowly rub them together. Make a chirping sound.



### **Dead Bug/Beetle/Happy Baby**

Lie on your back and tuck your knees into your chest. Slide your hands down your legs and grab your feet on the pinky toe side. Open your legs and pull your knees toward your armpits.



### **Grasshopper**

Stand with your feet slightly apart. Bend your knees, lean forward slightly, and stretch your grasshopper wings (your arms) out to the side.



### **Ladybug**

Begin in child's pose. Lift your arms up and back behind you, so that they are reaching toward the ceiling with your palms facing up. Flutter your wings and lift up your head.



### **Mosquito**

Stand with your legs wide apart. Stretch your arms out in front of you and bring your palms together to make a stinger.



### **Spider**

Come down to a squat. Grab your ankles and lift your bottom. For fun in the pose, walk like a spider.

## Nature Poses



### Crescent Moon/Banana

Stand tall and reach your arms over your head, bringing your palms together. Tilt your upper body to one side. Peel your banana by drawing your arms straight down your sides, one at a time.



### Crooked Tree Branch/Reclined Twist/Windshield Wipers

Lie on your back, bend your knees, and place the bottoms of your feet on the ground. Stretch your arms out to the side. Slowly drop your knees to one side of the ground and turn your head to look in the other direction. Make windshield wipers by dropping your knees from side to side.



### Flower

Begin seated with the soles of your feet together. Slide your hands under your ankles, slowly lean back, and lift your feet off the ground. Bring your arms, already in the bowl shape that your legs make, out and under your knees.



### Half Moon

From standing, put your right hand on the ground in front of you and a little to the side. Your right knee is bent. Put weight on your hand and slowly begin to lift your left foot off the ground. Try to bring your left leg parallel to the ground, and keep your right arm straight and under your shoulder. Reach your left hand to the sky.



### Lake

Sit on your bottom and spread your legs out wide. If you are sitting in a circle, you can bring your feet to touch the feet of the people on either side of you to make a big lake.



### Lotus/Easy Pose/Criss-Cross

Sit tall, on your bottom with your legs crossed.



### **Mountain/Popsicle/ Frozen Stick of Butter**

Stand tall with your feet facing forward and your arms by your sides, palms facing slightly forward.



### **Rainbow/Airplane/Side Plank**

Start kneeling. Place one hand on the ground beside your hip. Stretch your outer leg out to the side, and reach your free arm up to the sky. Try to extend your other leg. Try to stack your feet on top of each other.



### **Rock/Seed/Mouse Pose/Child's Pose**

Sit on your heels, bend forward over your thighs and place your forehead on the ground. Let your arms rest by your sides with your palms up, stretched out in front of you, or tucked under your forehead.



### **Rolling Log**

Lie on the ground with your arms alongside your body or straight over your head, and roll in one direction. For more fun a few kids lie down next to each other. One person lies on top of them with their arms and legs facing away from theirs, and lets herself be moved forward as the logs roll in the same direction. Super fun!



### **Star**

Stand tall with your feet wide apart. Stretch your arms out and slightly up. Shine bright like a star! Tilt from side to side like a twinkling star, bringing first one foot and then the other off the ground. Bring one hand down to the ground near your foot like a falling star. (triangle) Lie on your back with your arms and legs out wide for a sleepy star.



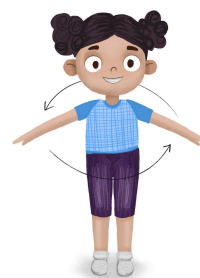
### **Star**

Sit on your bottom with your legs crossed and bring your hands to your shoulders, lifting your elbows to make 5 points with your head, elbows and knees.



### **Thunderbolt/Side Angle/Fighter Jet**

From warrior 2, place your elbow on your knee and reach your other arm up and over head.



### **Tornado/Helicopter**

Standing with your feet slightly apart, hold your arms slightly out to the side and begin to twist from side to side. When your helicopter comes in to land you can jump your feet together.



### **Tree**

Stand tall. Lift one foot and place it on the calf or thigh of your other leg. Point that knee out to the side and reach your arms up and out like the branches of a tree.



### **Volcano/Rocket Ship**

Start in a squat, on tip toes or with heels flat on the ground. Hands are on the ground between your legs or together at your heat. Count backward from 10 -1 and when you get to number 1 jump into the air like an exploding volcano. Make the sound of a volcano.



### **Waterfall/Rag Doll/ Forward Fold/Rain**

From standing, reach your arms up to the sky and slowly bring them down toward your toes in a forward fold.

## Object Poses



### **Bow/Basket/Sleigh**

Lie on your belly, bend your knees and reach back to grab your ankles, Lift your chest and thighs off the ground.



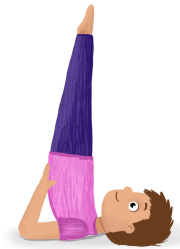
### **Bridge/Igloo**

Lie on your back and place your feet on the ground a few inches from your bottom with your knees up. Place your arms along your sides with your palms facing down. Push down on your hands and feet and lift your hips.



### **Drawbridge**

From bridge pose, lift one leg up to the sky.



### **Candlestick**

Lie on your back. Bring your legs straight up in the air and support your lower back with your hands.



### **Castle/House/Circus Tent/Volcano**

From standing, step your feet apart and bring your palms together overhead.



### **Chair/Elevator**

Stand tall and reach your arms above your head. Slowly bend your knees as if you are sitting in a chair.



### **Dancer/Hot Air Balloon/Ballerina/Crane/Emu**

Stand tall and bend one knee behind you. Reach back with your hand and grab your foot. Raise your opposite arm in front of you and simultaneously lean forward slightly and pull your foot upward.



### **Firecracker**

From plank pose, roll on to one side of your feet. Lift one hand and your top foot off the ground and extend them upward.



### **Gate**

Begin kneeling, and stretch one leg out to the side. Slide your hand down your leg toward your foot. Open and close your gate by lifting your opposite arm up and overhead to the side and bringing it back down by your side again.



### **Gate**

Begin kneeling, and place one hand on the ground a few inches away from your knee. Stretch your outer leg out and reach your outer arm up and overhead for a side stretch.



### **Greeting/Kneeling Side Stretch**

From hands and knees, lift one arm up to the sky and wave. Say hello.



### **Hero**

Sit tall on your heels and place your hands on your thighs.





### **Ladder/Walking on the Ceiling**

Lie on your back and stretch your legs up to the sky.



### **Plank/Crocodile**

Hold the top of a push up.



### **Plow**

Lie on your back and bring your legs up and over your head, keeping your legs straight. Place your feet on the floor behind you. Support your back with your palms, or keep your arms out straight on the ground in front of you.



### **Pyramid/Ostrich**

Begin standing with your feet slightly apart, and take a comfortable step forward with one foot. Reach your arms up to the sky, bend at the waist and slowly fold your body forward over your front leg.



### **Rag Doll/Waterfall/Forward Fold**

From standing, reach your arms up to the sky and slowly bring them down toward your toes in a forward fold.



### **Seated Forward Fold**

Sit on your bottom with your legs straight out in front of you. Bring one foot to the inside of your thigh, and reach down to try to touch the toes on your other foot.



### **Seated Forward Fold/Sandwich**

Sit on your bottom with your legs straight out in front of you. Try to touch your toes.



### **Seated Side Stretch**

Sit on your bottom with your legs crossed. Place one hand on the ground next to your hip. Reach the other arm up and overhead to the side.



### **Slide/Spatula**

Sit on your bottom with your legs straight out in front of you. Put your hands on the ground behind you, fingers pointed toward your feet. Point your toes down as you lift your hips, creating one long line from your shoulders to your toes.



### **Sphinx**

Lie on your belly. Place your forearms on the ground and stretch your upper body toward the sky.



### **Superhero/Airplane**

Lie on your belly and reach your arms forward. Lift your chest, shoulders, arms and legs and fly through the sky.



### **Table/Ant**

Come on to your hands and knees.



### **Table/Crab**

Sit on your bottom with your feet on the floor and your knees bent, and your hands on the floor behind you. Lift your bottom toward the sky. You can crab walk side to side, forward and backward. You can give high fives to your crab friends - with your feet of course!



### **Teapot**

From triangle pose, place your top hand on your hip like the handle on a teapot.



### **Telephone**

Sit on your bottom with your legs crossed. Pick up your outer foot with both hands and bring it to your ear. Say hello.



### **Triangle**

Begin in star pose, with your feet apart and your arms stretched out to the sides. Turn one foot so that it is pointing away from you. Bend at the waist and tip your body over to the side, reaching your hand down toward the foot with the toes facing out.



### **Umbrella**

Stand tall and reach your arms out to the sides with your fingers pointed up.



### **Washing Machine/Bee**

Sit on your bottom in criss-cross. Place your hands on your shoulders and twist your upper body from side to side.

## Food Poses



### **Banana/Crescent Moon**

Stand tall and reach your arms over your head, bringing your palms together. Tilt your upper body to one side. Peel your banana by drawing your arms straight down your sides, one at a time.



### **Burrito/Sushi/Mummy**

This is great for relaxation. Kids lie down on their yoga mat sideways and close to the edge. Arms can be alongside the body or stretched up overhead and out of the mat. Slowly begin rolling kids up in their mats. Older kids can roll themselves up.



### **Egg/Orange**

Come into a squat, heels lifted or on the ground, and wrap your arms around your knees.



### **Pineapple**

Standing, bring your heels together, toes apart and bend at the knees. Interlace your thumbs and spread your fingers wide. Place the base of your hands on top of your head.



### **Pizza/Pie/Cake/Seated Wide Leg Forward Fold**

Sit with your legs out wide and slowly fold forward.



### **Popsicle/Mountain**

Stand tall with your feet facing forward and your arms by your sides, palms facing slightly forward.



### **Pretzel/Seated Twist**

Sit on your bottom with your legs crossed. Take one hand, bring it across your body and place it on your knee. Take your free hand and place it behind you on the ground, sit up tall, and look over your shoulder in the direction of your hand on the ground.



### **Sandwich/Seated Forward Fold**

Sit on your bottom with your legs straight out in front of you. Try to touch your toes.



### **Soup**

Sit on your bottom and cross your legs. Put your hands on your knees and move your upper body in circles, stirring the pot of soup first one way and then the other.

## Transportation Poses



### Airplane/Superhero/Swimming/ Canoe

Lie on your belly and reach your arms forward. Lift your chest, shoulders, arms and legs and fly through the sky.



### Airplane/Warrior 3

Standing tall, lift one foot off the ground and stretch that leg behind you. Reach your arms out in front of you, then out to the sides, and balance on one foot.



### Bicycle

Lie on your back with your arms by your side and lift your feet off the ground. Begin cycling your legs in a circular motion as if you are riding a bike.



### Boat

Begin sitting on your bottom with your knees bent and your feet on the floor. Place your hands under your knees and lift your feet off the floor, so your shins are parallel to the ground. Try bringing your arms out from under your knees and extending them forward and slightly up. Pretend to row using your arms.



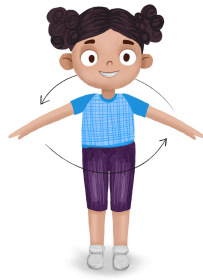
### Car

Seated with your legs stretched out in front of you, hold on to the steering wheel. Don't let go! Begin to scootch forward on your bottom using your belly muscles, like you are driving a car. If you are in a circle and the kids move forward until their legs touch, oh no, a traffic jam (!) and you'll have to scoot back.



### Climbing

Begin standing. Reach up with one arm while simultaneously lifting your opposite knee. Switch sides and repeat. Try touching your elbow to your opposite knee as you climb



### **Helicopter**

Standing with your feet slightly apart, hold your arms slightly out to the side and begin to twist from side to side. When your helicopter comes in to land you can jump your feet together.



### **Rocketship/Chair/Elevator**

Standing with your feet together, bring your palms together in front of you. Countdown backwards as you lower your bottom down closer to the ground with each count. When you get to “0”, blast off by jumping your body toward the sky with your arms overhead.



### **Skateboard/Surf/Snowboard/ Warrior 2**

Step your feet wide apart and stretch your arms out to the side. Point one foot away from you, and bend that knee. Look beyond your fingertips above your bent knee. Get on your surfboard and ride the waves by bouncing your knee in surfer pose, or flag a taxi down.



### **Sled**

Sit on your bottom with your legs stretched out in front of you. If you are using a yoga mat you can hold the edges of your mat as the sled.



### **Sleigh/Bow**

Lie on your belly with your arms by your sides. Bend your knees and reach back to grab your ankles. Lift your chest and thighs off the ground.



### **Walking**

When we walk in yoga we don't leave our yoga mat! Keep one foot on the ground and walk by swinging only one foot back and forth. You can start with your hands on your hips for more balance, and eventually try swinging your arms as you walk. For more of a challenge, swing your foot across your whole body as you walk.

## Partner Poses

Practicing partner poses is a great way for kids to build connections with others. By doing poses together, kids are learning how to connect, communicate and cooperate. It also offers kids a great opportunity to practice how to touch with respect, how to be gentle, and how to trust. And of course partner poses are a lot of fun!

Sometimes a difficult moment may occur when a teacher asks a group of kids to find a partner. Some may want to always partner with the same person, or a little conflict may arise when more than one person wants to have the same partner.

A teacher can make partner yoga easier for kids by helping them find a partner. One way to do this is to guide kids to pair up with someone who has something similar in common: two siblings, same type of pet, same shirt color, same hair length, same backpack color, same birthday month, etc. Teachers can also assign partners.

When instructing partner poses it can be helpful to give each partner a name. For example, one partner can be ketchup and one can be mustard, or one can be salt and one can be pepper, or peanut butter and jelly, etc. It can be easier for kids to understand the instruction of, "Ketchup, put your hands on mustard's shoulders", than "One person put your hands on the other person's shoulders."

It can also be helpful to put an ink stamp or sticker on each person's right hand or foot. Young kids have trouble knowing which side is right and which is left, and it will be easier for them to follow instructions if the teacher can say, for example, "Reach your hand with the sticker on it up to the sky."

Partner poses should always feel good for both partners. Encourage kids to move slowly and mindfully with each other and to speak up if they need to have more or less of a stretch.

The main goal in practicing partner poses is to enjoy the movement and connection.

Encourage kids to be creative and have fun with the poses.



## Partner Poses



### Partner Boat

Sit facing your partner with your legs together, knees bent, and your toes touching. Holding your partner's hands, place the soles of your feet together and slowly push and lift them together as you straighten your legs.



### Partner Yacht

From partner boat pose, slowly lift your arms and bring them in between your knees, and bring your legs out wide. Keep your feet pressed against your partner's feet.



### Partner Yacht with Arm Stretches

In your yacht pose, if you start with your arms crossed (your right hand is holding your partner's right hand, and left hand holds left), you will be able to let go of one hand and twist to the side. After reconnecting, let go of the other hand and twist to the other side.



### Partner Paddle Boat/Bicycle

Lie on your back and place the soles of your feet against the soles of your partner's feet. Begin to peddle your bike or row your boat by pushing the soles of your feet against your partner's feet, alternating between bending and straightening each leg. You can also row your boats by pushing both feet back and forth at the same time



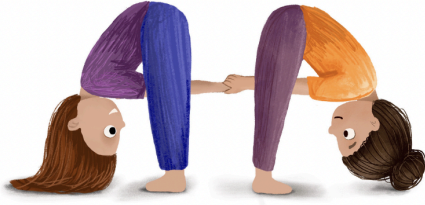
### Partner Candle

Lie on your back, stretch your legs up and rest them against your partner's legs.



### Double Dog

One person comes into downward dog pose and the other person places their palms on the floor about a foot or so in front of the dog's feet and puts the top of their feet on the dog's sacrum. If you are the dog on top try to bring your body 90 degrees to your legs by walking your hands closer to the bottom dog.



### Monkey Friends/Partner Wide Legged Forward Fold

Stand back to back with a partner, step your feet apart and lean down to hold hands. You can gently swing forward and back like a monkey, or you can practice a counter balance by leaning away from your partner.



### Lizard on a Rock

One person comes into rock pose. The second person carefully sits on the rock's sacrum and slowly leans back until his whole body is resting on the rock, with his feet stretched out in front of him. The person on top might have to adjust a bit so that they are sacrum to sacrum for the best feeling.



### Comfy Chair

Sit back to back with your partner. One person has their legs stretched out in front of them and the other begins by sitting on their heels. The person sitting on their heels will fold forward into child's pose as their partner leans against their back.



### Back to Back Breathing

Sit back to back with your partner and breathe. Try to match your breathing to your partner's breathing.



### Partner Easy Pose

Sit back to back with your partner, legs crossed. Take your arms out to the sides and touch palms or hold hands with your partner. If one person's arms are longer than the other you can hold their forearm. One person can lean forward and gently pull on their partner's arms, giving them a nice chest opening stretch.



### Partner Seated Twist

Sit back to back with your partner, legs crossed. Take your arms out to the sides and touch palms or hold hands with your partner. If one person's arms are longer than the other you can hold their forearm. Keeping your arms out to the sides you can twist from side to side.



### Partner Pretzel

Sit back to back with your partner, legs crossed. Take your right hand and put it on your partner's left knee. Place your left hand on your right knee and twist to the right. Bring your backs and shoulders together for a nice twist.



### Partner Pretzel Lean Back

Sit with your legs crossed, facing your partner. Join hands, and lean back to open your chest.



### Partner Pretzel Lean Back with a Twist

Sit with your legs crossed, facing your partner. Hold right hands and lean back, stretching your left arm out to the side. Switch sides.



### Seesaw

Sit facing your partner with your legs extended forward. Bring the soles of your feet together and hold hands. Gently take turns pulling forward.



### Wide Legged Seesaw

Sit facing your partner with your legs extended and wide apart. Bring the soles of your feet together and hold hands. Gently take turns pulling forward.



### Seesaw with a Twist

Sit facing your partner with your legs extended forward and the soles of your feet together. Cross your arms and hold right hands. Open left arms out to the side. Switch sides.



### Seated Wide Legged Twist

Sit facing your partner with your legs extended and wide apart. Bring your feet together and hold hands. Lift one set of elbows high up and twist up to open the chest.



### Back to Back Crescent Moon

Standing back to back with your partner, reach your arms up and hold hands. Lean to one side and then the other.



### Partner Kneeling Side Bend

Start kneeling next to your partner and a few inches away, and join hands. Reach your outer arm up and lean toward your partner to hold hands overhead.



### Partner Gate

Start on your knees next to your partner with your leg stretched out toward your partner and your inner feet touching. As you slide your inner arm down toward your foot, reach your outer arm up and overhead to join hands.



### Partner Tree

Stand beside your partner and put your inner arm around each other's shoulders or waist. Slowly lift your outer leg and place your foot on your shin or thigh. Bring your outer hand in and palm to palm with your partner.



### Partner Tree

Stand beside your partner and raise your inner arms to touch palm to palm. Slowly lift your outer leg and place your foot on your shin or thigh. Bring your outer hand in palm to palm with your partner.





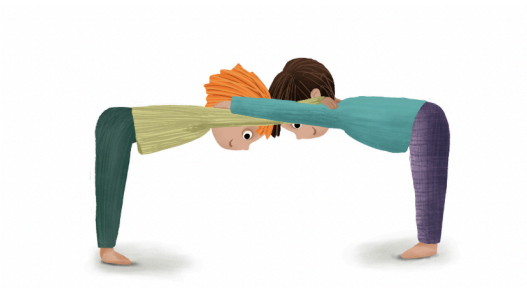
### Wheelbarrow

One person is the wheelbarrow, placing their hands on the ground and their feet stretched straight back. The other partner (the farmer) stands behind the wheelbarrow and lifts their legs. For more fun you can have wheelbarrow races.



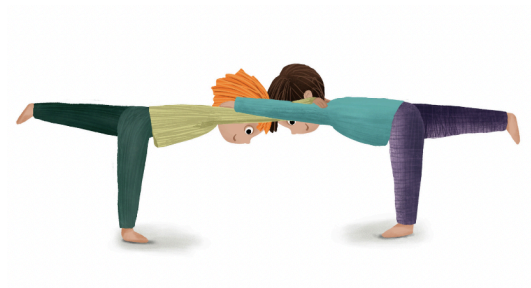
### Castle/House

Stand facing your partner, reach your arms up and overhead, and place your palms against your partner's palms. Take a few steps back and away from your partner. Invite your friends to come inside.



### House with a Flat Roof/ Lean On Me

Stand facing your partner, place your hands on your partner's shoulders and bend at the waist.



### Partner Airplane

Standing, face your partner and hold hands or place your hands on your partner's shoulders. Lean forward and lift one foot off the ground and stretch it out behind you.



### Double Dancers

Standing, face your partner and hold one hand or join palm to palm as you reach down with your other hand to grab your foot. Support your partner in this balance pose.



### Warrior 3 Friends/Double Airplane

Stand next to your partner and put your arms around each other's shoulders. Stretch your outer arm out to the side, slowly bend at the waist, lift your outer foot and stretch your leg out behind you.

## Fun Ways to Teach Kids Yoga

There's no right or wrong way to teach yoga to kids, and there are lots of different ways you can share the practice with kids. Here are some options:

**Yoga books** - Kids love books, and using a book is an easy way to keep kids focused and engaged. There are many specific yoga books catering to even the littlest kids, but you can also use a book that has lots of animals, for example, or objects in nature, and then you read the book and do the pose every time you see the animal or object. You can also act out the movements of the animals.

**Go on a journey** - You can decide where you'd like to go for your yoga journey, then act out in yoga poses how you will get there and what you will see and do while you are there. You can allow the kids to take turns suggesting what you will see or do next on your trip.

**Choose a theme** - A great way to plan a class is around a topic, season, holiday or theme like Halloween, the beach, winter fun, the ocean, etc. See the following section for more theme ideas.

**Yoga games** - Kids love yoga games! See the section on games and/or create your own, or you can even buy yoga specific games for kids to play.

**Circle stories** - The teacher begins to tell a story while coming into a yoga pose that represents her part of the story. For example, "one day I took a trip on an airplane" while doing airplane pose. When the teacher completes her part of the story and her pose she says "and then" and the next person continues the story with an accompanying yoga pose. "And then while I was on the plane I looked out the window and saw some trees (while doing tree pose), and then", etc. When finished with their part, kids will say "and then", and the story continues until everyone has had a chance to add a part of the story and a new pose. It ends when the entire story is retold with everyone doing all of the poses again.

**Yoga Cards** - Using yoga cards is a great way to teach poses and keep kids focused and engaged. There are lots of different yoga cards you can buy or you can make your own. You can print out pictures of yoga poses found on the internet or draw your own. You can have kids pick a pose card that they learn and teach to the others. You can play games that have kids moving to music, with the cards spread around the room, and when the music stops they have to do the pose on the card closest to them. You can use yoga cards with specific poses as visuals to support the theme of your class. There are many possibilities.

**Pose bag** - Fill a bag with stuffed animals or other toys or objects. Have the kids take turns reaching in the bag and pulling something out and turning it into a yoga pose.

**Partner/group poses** - Yoga is always fun when you share it with a partner. See the section on partner poses or make up your own.

## Themes for Teaching Kids Yoga

**ABCs** - Choose poses that begin with each letter of the alphabet. So many possibilities.

**Animals** - Again, so many possibilities. How many animal poses do you already know? How many ways can you move like an animal? Can you name an animal that starts with the letter of your first name? You can also create sub themes like desert animals, zoo animals, animals that hibernate, arctic animals, etc.

**Balance** - Try to balance small stuffed animals, bean bags, or other small objects on different body parts, or in different yoga poses. You can also practice traditional balancing poses, like tree, flamingo, airplane, dancer, etc.

**Beach** - Go on an adventure to the beach. Decide how you will get there and the things you will see and do while you are there, and act it all out in yoga poses. Pose ideas: Pretend to put on sunscreen, lobster, beach chair, umbrella, starfish, shark.

**Birds** - Lots of ways to practice breathing while pretending to fly or while practicing bird poses. How many different birds can you name? Pose ideas: Eagle, flamingo, pigeon, swan, roadrunner, etc.

**Bugs** - Focus on and imitate ways bugs move and crawl, creep, slither, wiggle, hop, jump, etc. while doing the bug pose. Pose ideas: Mosquito, grasshopper, spider, bee.

**Camping** - Go on a camping trip. Decide how you will get there and the things you will see and do while you are there, and act it all out in yoga poses. Pose ideas: tent, hiking, waterfall, fish, lake, bears.

**Earth Day** - Talk about ways to take care of mother earth and create associated poses, like plant a tree (tree pose), walk more (walking on ceiling pose), save water (waterfall pose), recycle (recycle bin pose, aka butterfly pose), etc.

**Gratitude** - Think of things you are grateful for and create associated poses.

**Halloween** - What things remind us of Halloween? Pose ideas: black cat, creaky gate, haunted house, witch, bat, cauldron. You can also create poses of what the kids are going to wear for their costumes.

**Hibernation** - What animals hibernate? Pretend to be different animals slowly waking up after a long winter, like bears, frogs, snakes or skunks.

**Fall** - Talk about the change of the season and read a fall themed book. Read the book and stop to do a pose for each page. Pose ideas, fox, squirrel, acorn, wind, pumpkin, etc.

**Farm** - Pretend to take a trip to a farm. Act out in yoga poses how you will get there and what you will see and do while you are there. Pose ideas: pick apples, ride a tractor, pig, duck, cow, horse.

**Gardening** - Spend some time working in the garden. Pose ideas: cut down the weeds (washing machine pose), clear the earth (plow pose), plant seeds (child's pose), make rain with your fingers, bee, frog, spider, flower, etc.

**Outer space** - Travel to outer space. How will you get there? What will you see there? Pose ideas: spaceship, rocket, alien, star, asteroid, etc.

**Peace** - Read The Peace Book by Todd Parr and stop and do a pose for each page.

**Picnic** - Go on a picnic. Pretend to make sandwiches, pack your picnic basket, what things you would do at the park, etc. Pose ideas: sandwich, picnic table, tree, ant, dog, kite, etc.

**Shapes** - How many shapes can we see in our yoga poses? Pose ideas: diamond (butterfly pose), oval (bow pose), crooked line (chair pose), square (table pose).

**Spring** - Act out the signs of spring like rainstorms, seeds growing to trees, caterpillars turning to butterflies, stomp in rain puddles, etc.

**Superheroes** - What are some strengths of superheroes you possess? How would you save the day? Pose examples: Wonder Woman, Spiderman, Superman, Black Lantern, etc.

**Teamwork** - What are the benefits of teamwork? More fun, more ideas, gets the job done quicker, etc. Practice poses with a partner or in a group.

**Things in the sky** - What are some things we see in the sky? Pose ideas: rainbow, bird, stars, clouds, helicopter, bumblebee, etc.

**Winter** - Read The Mitten by Jan Brett and do a pose for each page. Pose ideas: raccoon, mouse, snowflake, sled, fox, rabbit.

**Winter fun** - How can we have fun in the snow? Pose ideas: go skiing (chair pose), snowboarding (warrior 3 pose), make snow angels, build a fire (candle pose), etc.



## Suggested Yoga Class Structure

A typical kids yoga class might look something like this:

- Short opening (5 mins)
- Breathing exercise and optional warm up activity (5 mins)
- Poses that support your class goal (10-20 mins)
- A yoga game (5 mins)
- Relaxation (5 mins)

A 20 minute yoga class is a good place to start for ages 2 and under. Around age 3 they are ready for 30 minutes, and by age 5 many are ready for a full 45 minutes. Of course this can vary widely depending on the child, their developmental ability and their mood on any given day.

One of the most effective things you can do is use routines as the foundation for your class structure. Choose a specific way to start and end your yoga class. Once the routine is established you can add variations and let kids choose and lead the routines of your class.

It's always a good idea to bookend your yoga class with a quiet, calming activity. This establishes the tone before class and sets it afterward.

Keep in mind that calming doesn't necessarily mean sitting on the floor in silence, (although it is suggested you begin any yoga class with a few mindful breaths). Practical calming for young kids might mean not getting upset or frustrated when working on a challenging pose. Or working on balancing poses that require, by default, focus and grounding to accomplish. Maybe it's playing a yoga game without getting competitive or one that doesn't require much physical movement. Calming, quieting and grounding can take on many forms, even fun forms, so consider approaching the idea from many different perspectives.

When choosing your poses consider all the possible ways they move our bodies.

**Standing poses** strengthen our legs and improve stability, balance, alignment, and posture.

**Forward bends** stretch our legs, spine and nervous system and help us to feel calm and peaceful inside.

**Back bends** are energizing, they open our chests and hearts.

**Twists and side bends** massage our inner organs and help release tension.

**Partner and group poses** increase cooperation, trust, teamwork, friendship and awareness of others.

## Yoga Games

Games are a great way for kids to develop skills like coordination, balance, patience, cooperation, teamwork, flexibility, body awareness, self confidence and listening.

Try to structure any game you play so that everyone is a winner. Competitive games can leave kids feeling left out or upset, so be sure to set up the rules of your games in such a way that they are non competitive and all the kids can participate the entire time without anyone having to sit out or anyone being labeled a winner or loser. Be careful too when creating games that there aren't kids waiting a long time for their turn.

### **Freeze yoga**

Play fun, peppy music and have everyone dance around the room. When the music stops, everyone must stop dancing and freeze in the yoga pose the teacher calls out. You can also place yoga cards around the room and when the music stops the kids have to do the pose on the card closest to them. Kids can also freeze in a pose of their own choice - or they can make one up.

### **1-2-3 Tree**

You'll need a lot of space for this game. One person, let's call them "it", stands at one end of the room, and the rest of the group stands in a line at the other end of the room, on one leg in tree pose. "It" turns her back and calls out loudly "1-2-3-tree" and then turns back to look at the group. When "it" has her back turned, the group can move or run forward, but when "it" turns around again the kids have to stand on one leg in tree pose. If "it" sees you moving forward or standing on two feet, you are sent back to the beginning. Whoever reaches "it" first gets to be the next "it". In this game, if anyone reaches "it" first more than once, they have to give up their turn to someone who hasn't yet had a chance to be "it".

### **Quack, Oink, Moo!**

Think of animals that make distinct noises, like a dog, cat, duck, pig, etc. Whisper the name of one of these animals to each person, making sure that each animal is mentioned to at least two kids. The kids walk around the room making the sound of their assigned animal and try to find the other kids who are representing the same one.

**Downward dog tunnels** - Although not really a game, if you have the room this one is so fun! Line up and then come into Downward Dog. The kid at one end gets down on his belly and crawls through the tunnel. At the end, they pop up and get into Downward Dog, and then the next kid in line goes through and pops up at the end and gets into the pose. And so on and so on. It's a great way to build strength as the kids will have to stay in the pose for a long time while everyone goes through the tunnel. You can also have the kids come into down dog with their feet up on a wall.

### **Balancing stuffed animals**

Use small stuffed animals or other toys or puppets and balance them on a part of your body while in different yoga poses. For example, you can put it on your head or your knee in tree pose, on your feet in candlestick pose, etc. Kids can also place them on their bellies and make them move up and down with their breath. Kids can take turns finding a way to balance their animal in a pose, and the rest of the group can try to imitate.

### **Bell game**

This requires enormous concentration. Sit in a circle and pass around a bell (or a few bells if you have them) and give everyone a chance to ring each one to hear what it sounds like. Then have kids close their eyes while you choose a bell to ring, and they have to guess which one you rang. You can also pass the bell (or bells) around the circle from one person to the next very slowly and without ringing the bell. For another variation, kids can choose a bell of their choice to carry with them as they walk around the outside of the circle, very slowly without ringing the bell.

### **Toe-ga**

For this game you will need colorful pom poms (or cotton balls) and a bucket for each person. The teacher turns on some music and spills a big pile of pom poms in the center of the circle and kids are instructed to pick up the pom poms with their toes and drop them in their bucket. It can take time to get used to using feet instead of hands, and some kids may need a hand to hold to balance. The game ends when all the pom poms have been picked up or you can play again. Kids can be instructed to pick up only one color pom pom, or pick up pom poms with both feet.

### **Yogi Says**

The leader, or “Yogi”, stands in front of the group and issues instructions for a pose or movement while showing them how to do it. The kids should follow the instructions only if the leader first says “Yogi says”. For example, “Yogi says hop up and down on two feet, yogi says hop up and down on one foot, yogi says wave your arms while hopping, now drop your arms.” If kids drop their arms, they made a mistake because “Yogi says” wasn't said first. To keep the game non competitive and fun for everyone, don't eliminate kids when they make a mistake. Kids tend to act on impulse without thinking, and this game demonstrates just that.

### **Yoga...yoga...yoga....pose**

This game is similar to duck, duck, goose. Everyone sits in a circle. One person is chosen to begin, and this person walks around the circle saying “yoga” as they touch each person on their head. Then, at some point instead of saying “yoga”, they say “pose”, and the person whose head was touched while hearing the word “pose” gets up and chases the other kid around the circle all the way back to their spot. Here's the catch - before each round, the teacher decides on a yoga pose, and those in the circle must remain in that yoga pose in order to be chosen to run. Make sure all kids have a chance to participate by having the “duck” choose someone new each time.

## **Relaxation**

It is important that kids learn techniques for relaxing when they feel good, because then in times of stress they will have already learned the tools to put their bodies and minds at ease.

Relaxation at the end of a yoga class or during a guided imagery can be anywhere between one and five minutes depending on the age and mood of the kids.

### **The atmosphere**

You can dim the lights. You can give kids blankets to cover themselves. You can play soft music.

### **The voice**

Your voice is the main tool that will guide kids to relax, so remember to speak slowly. Maintain a steady rhythm with pauses in between your sentences or after conjuring up an image. Speak loud enough for the kids to hear you, yet softer than your usual voice.

### **The breath**

One of the main components of relaxation is the deepening of the breath. Begin any relaxation by inviting kids to notice and slow down their breath.

### **The pose**

The traditional way to relax at the end of a yoga class is to lie flat on your back with your arms by your sides, palms up. In this pose, the body isn't using any muscles to support any body part, so there is less need to fidget and adjust a body part that may be getting tired. This can also be called the “do nothing” pose. However, little kids don't always enjoy this. It's ok to allow kids to lie on their bellies or curled up on their side during relaxation.

### **Guided imagery**

In a visualization, you are taking the kids on a journey within themselves. Try to use as many senses and sensations as you can. Describe not only what you see, but what you hear, smell, feel, sense and taste as well.

### **Touch**

During relaxation you can give kids a foot rub or a light massage to their back or head. Always ask before starting your relaxation if there is anyone who does not want to be touched.

### **Burritos/sushi rolls/mummies**

Kids love rolling up in their yoga mat. They can lie down on their yoga mat sideways and close to the edge. Arms can be alongside the body inside the mat or stretched out overhead and out of the mat. Slowly begin rolling kids up in their mats.

### **The end**

Be sure to end any relaxation slowly. Have kids wiggle their fingers or toes, stretch their arms overhead, or roll over to their side and use their arm as a pillow for a few breaths before getting up. The more slowly you end the relaxation, the longer the benefits will linger.

## **Introduction to Mindfulness**

Kids of all ages can benefit from mindfulness, which is the practice of paying attention to the present moment. It's a great skill for kids to learn because it is a useful tool to help them focus and pay attention, decrease stress and anxiety, and find a sense of peace, calm and overall happiness.

The idea is that when kids pay attention to breathing in and breathing out, they start to feel calm inside. Then they can learn to notice their feelings, even upsetting ones. This gives them time to decide what they want to do about the upsetting feeling, rather than just reacting immediately. Mindfulness can not only help them feel less anxious, it can improve their decision making skills and stop them from having a tantrum if they are frustrated or angry.

Mindfulness has many modalities. Listening can be mindful. Eating can be mindful. Games and activities can be mindful.

### **Mindfulness in the classroom. How to get started:**

1. Rather than trying to define the word to a 3 or 4 yr old, invite kids to feel their experiences. Start by teaching kids to notice their breath and from there to notice the experiences they are having.
2. If you exaggerate your deep breathing and make it big or dramatic, even the littlest kids will copy you. It doesn't matter so much that they know why they are taking deep breaths, just that they are getting the benefits when they do.
3. Keep your mindfulness practices short, fun and consistent.
4. Make it part of your routine by attaching it to something you and the kids do every day.
5. Start each day with a mindful breath (and stretch!).

# Mindful Breathing

## **Belly breath**

Sitting or lying down on your back, place your hands on your belly so that you can feel your belly moving with your breath. When you breathe in, notice your belly inflating like a balloon, becoming bigger. When you breathe out, notice your balloon (belly) deflate and become smaller.

## **Balloon breath**

Stand tall. Take a deep breath in and reach your arms overhead, making the shape of a balloon. Breath out and bring your arms back down by your sides. Ask kids what color balloon breath will you take next?

## **Ball breath**

Hold up your outstretched hands, match fingers and touch tip to tip lightly, to make a ball. As you inhale, let your fingers stretch open, still touching at the tips. Close the ball as you exhale, collapsing your fingers into a light ball. For more movement, open your arms wide on the inhale and bring fingertips back together on the exhale.

## **Sun Breath**

Stand tall. Take a big breath in and reach your arms all the way up to the sun. Look up. Say "Hello sun!" Breath out and bring your hands all the way down to the ground. We don't want the earth to feel left out so we say "Hello earth!" Repeat as many times as you like.

## **Hot cocoa breath**

Pretend you are holding a cup of hot cocoa. Breathe in deeply, and imagine you are smelling the chocolatey goodness. Breath out like you are blowing on the hot cocoa to cool it down.

## **Flower breath**

Hold up your pointer finger and pretend it is a flower. Breathe in deeply and imagine you are smelling the wonderful flowery scent. What kind of flower does it smell like?

## **Hug breath**

Standing or sitting, take a big breath in and open your arms wide. As you breathe out cross your arms over and grab your shoulders, one arm on top of the other and give yourself a big hug. For little kids you could say: "A hug to Amy, next a hug to Josh, this hug goes to Kate..." with everyone sending hugs to the group one by one. You can end by saying "this last hug we'll send to everyone in the world who needs a hug today"

## **Sigh breath**

Inhale as deeply as you can and make a big sigh sound as you exhale - like "hahhhhhh....."

### **Rainbow breath**

Sit with your legs crossed. Place one hand on the ground beside your hip, and as you breathe in, reach up and over to the side with your other arm, as if you have a paintbrush and are painting a rainbow in the sky. Bring your arm down as you exhale, and repeat on the other side. You can alternate back and forth until you have painted all the colors of the rainbow, calling out each color of the rainbow for each breath.

### **Washing machine breath/Helicopter breath**

Place your hands on your shoulders and start twisting your upper body from side to side. Breathe in as you twist to one side and breathe out as you twist to the other side. *Fun at the end of washing machine breath* - finish by drying the clothes. Holding arms out front and bent at the elbows, circle the hands in front of the body first one direction then the other.

### **Yawn breath**

Inhale through your mouth while stretching your arms up and overhead, and as you breath out make a big yawn sound and bring your arms down. Interestingly enough, watching someone yawn has a ripple effect and soon a real yawn may follow.

### **Animal breath**

Inhale deeply and as you exhale make the sound of an animal. Try to make the sound last as long as you can. You can do easy ones like a buzz sound for a bee, a long moo for a cow, hissssss for a snake etc. or you can let the kids come up with more complicated ones of their own, like a cheetah? By creating a sensation in the mouth, the attention goes to that spot, and the mind becomes quiet.

### **Animal breathing**

Lie on your back and place a small stuffed animal on your belly. When you breathe in you lift up the animal using your belly, and when you breathe out you lower the animal down. It's easier for kids to be aware of their abdominal breath if they have an object weighing on their belly.

### **Shrug breath**

Sit with your legs crossed and your hands resting on your knees. As you slowly breathe in, shrug your shoulders up close to your ears, and as you breathe out of your mouth let your shoulders drop quickly down again. Repeat a few times.

**Lion's breath** - Kneel, bring your hands on your knees and curl them like lion claws. As you breathe in deeply, draw your claws in toward your hips and up toward your chest. As you breathe out, open your mouth wide, stick out your tongue, open your eyes wide, lean forward or come up on your knees and roar like a lion. You can also make a baby lion's breath and use a whisper roar, or make a dragon breath and breathe fire out of your mouth. Kids can also kneel and place their lion paws on the ground in front of them, keeping them there when they roar.

**Spiderman breath**

Breathe in, bring your fists to your chest. Breathe out, slowly, extending your arms and opening your fists, shooting out your webs - whoosh! In, out. In, out.

**Elephant breath/Woodchopper breath**

Standing with feet apart, inhale through your nose and lift your trunk (your arms and hands with interlocked fingers) up, and exhale through your mouth, dropping your trunk and body down.

**Reach and pull breath**

Inhale and lift your arms to reach up, exhale and with a pulling motion as if you are pulling something, bring your arms back down. Repeat a few times.

**Stand and squat**

Inhale while standing up and exhale while coming into a squat.

**Hot breath/cool breath (or heating and air conditioning)**

Inhale deeply and purse your lips as you exhale. You can hold up your hand in front of your mouth and notice the breath is cool when it comes out of pursed lips. Then take another deep breath in and exhale through an open mouth. If you hold up your hand to your mouth when you exhale you'll notice the breath is hot.

**Love breath**

Inhale as deeply as you can, and then exhale saying a very long "love". You can also begin by making the symbol of love with your hands over your heart, and then throwing your arms out wide as you say the word love, as if you are throwing out love to everyone in the room.



## **Mindful Activities**

### **Recognize your emotion**

Sit in a circle and take turns sharing a response to the teacher's question to each child: "How are you feeling?" You can also try using a weather related word for a response.

### **Think of a happy memory**

Close your eyes (optional) and remember a time when you felt happy. Maybe someone did something nice for you. Perhaps you got a smile from a friend or your mom or dad was happy to see you. Remember a wonderful moment like that. Just close your eyes and bring it to your mind. Describe what that happy memory was and notice how you feel when you remember the memory.

### **Send kind thoughts**

Close your eyes and bring someone you really like to mind. Imagine them happy and smiling at you. Say to them: May you be happy. May you be peaceful. Notice how your mind and heart feel when you do this. Notice how your body feels. Now send kind thoughts to yourself and say to yourself: May I be happy. May I be peaceful. How does this make you feel?

### **What do you hear?**

Sit in a circle and close your eyes. Hold your body still and listen very carefully. What do you hear? Maybe you hear the sound of your breath or your ears buzzing. Maybe you hear the sound of a ticking clock or an appliance humming. Maybe you can hear the sound of a car or plane or rain. Count how many noises you can hear in one minute.

### **Find your breath**

Take 3 slow, mindful breaths right now. Feel each breath from start to finish. Take it slow and put all your curiosity into it. Can you feel your breath at your nose, belly or chest? Does your belly go up and down? Does your chest expand and contract? Can you feel the air going in and out of your nose?

### **Chill corner**

What are the best ways for you to calm down and relax? Maybe yoga stretches help you calm down. Maybe coloring soothes you, or holding a favorite stuffy. Maybe looking at a book, or taking some deep breaths. Talk about ideas down and put them in a special place or make a poster. When difficult emotions become too much to handle, pay a visit to the "chill corner" or "chill poster".

### **Say something kind**

Sit in a circle and share a kindness that someone did for you today. Maybe they shared a toy, or played with you at recess. How did it make you feel? Share a kindness you did for someone today. Maybe you let someone go ahead of you in line, or helped the teacher clean up after an activity.

## Mindful Games

### Telephone

Sit in a circle and pass a word, sentence or phrase around the circle by whispering it in the ear of the person sitting next to you, who then whispers it in the ear of the next person, and so on. Keep the sentence or phrase positive! See how much it changes when it comes back to you.

### Singing Bowl

Ask kids to come into child's pose and cover their eyes. Let them listen to the sound of a singing bowl, and come to a sitting position when the sound ends.

### Wind in the trees

Half the kids are trees and hold tree pose. The other half are the wind and gently travel in and out of the trees, making noise but being careful not to touch them. The trees try not to fall. Then switch.

### Guess what I changed

One person is chosen to stand in the middle of the circle of kids while everyone takes a good look at them. Then everyone in the group comes into child's pose and covers their eyes while the person in the middle changes one thing about their appearance, for example pushing their shirt sleeves up or moving a bracelet to a different wrist. Then the others open their eyes and raise their hands if they have a guess what it was the person changed. The person who guesses gets to be in the middle next.

### Ball pass and share

Begin by sitting in a circle and deciding what the group will share among themselves. It can be their favorite stuffy, what they had for breakfast or something they love to do. When you have the ball you share whatever it is you've decided to talk about, then pass the ball to the person sitting next to you. You can also pass the ball around with your feet instead of your hands.

### Focus on the tray

Fill a tray with small objects: a pencil, small toy, keys, paper clip, etc. Cover this tray with a cloth. Lift the cover and show the kids the tray by walking around. Let them memorize what they see. The aim of the game is to remember as much as possible.

### Finger, thumb

On one hand, hold up your index finger. On the other hand, hold up your thumb. Simultaneously switch as fast as you can, so that whichever hand held up the index finger now holds up the thumb, and vice versa. This is super challenging for preschool age kids and it's best to try with just one hand at first.

## Guided Imagery

When we imagine ourselves to be in a peaceful, pleasant environment our body and our mind respond by relaxing. In guided imagery, one is led by another person's voice to imagine a situation that differs from our current one.

The benefits of guided imagery are numerous, both at home and in the classroom. Being guided helps kids focus and prevent their mind from wandering while providing a positive, new experience. A guided imagery helps kids improve their self esteem, relieve stress and anxiety, find peace in the present moment, manage anger, and develop an overall positive mental attitude at school and at home. A guided imagery also helps alleviate the feeling of being out of control or overwhelmed.

### How to get started:

1. Choose a script. You can find many online and in books and apps, or you can make up your own. Let the interests of the kids guide you in choosing a script. Keep it short and simple. Anything that is slow moving, soft, warm and calm is good. Try to use as many senses and sensations as you can. Describe not only what you see, but what you hear, smell, feel, sense and taste as well.
2. Read the script to yourself first to find your rhythm.
3. Choose a time when you have the kids' attention. Make sure they are comfortable, relaxed and calm. At the end of a yoga class or before nap time is a great place to start.
4. Find a place free from distractions, interruptions or loud noises.
5. Use your voice to instill a sense of calm in the room by speaking softly and slowly.
6. The magic age seems to be around 4. You can always try with younger kids and if they aren't receptive, let it go and try again in a few months.

Guided imagery with wiggly preschoolers might not go as you envision, but the more you use the scripts the more easily the kids will be able to relax and concentrate. Here are some ideas.

- A rainy day
- The ocean waves
- The rainforest
- Floating on a fluffy cloud
- A winter wonderland
- Guardian Angel
- A secret garden
- Walking on a path in the woods
- Drifting in a boat on the water
- A star shining light into us
- A fairy world
- A magic carpet ride

**Guided imagery example: Forest path**

Close your eyes and imagine you are on a path in the middle of a forest. The sun is shining down on you, warming the top of your head. You hear birds chirping overhead, and the sounds of the leaves on the trees rustling in the wind. If you listen closely you can hear the sounds of forest animals off in the distance. There is a cool breeze on your face as you begin walking down the path. The path is soft under your feet, and you are walking so silently that you can't even hear the sound of your own footsteps. You like being out alone in nature. It's very quiet and peaceful. You come to a small clearing in the woods and you decide to step off the path and lie down in the cool, green grass. You look up at the clouds and watch them lazily drift overhead. You feel calm and relaxed and peaceful. Take in a nice, deep breath and bring your attention back to where you are, along with all the calm, peaceful feelings of relaxation. Now you're feeling energized a peaceful....ready for (whatever comes next)

**Guided imagery example: Relaxing rainbow**

Close your eyes and imagine that in front of you is the most beautiful rainbow. You can see reds, oranges, yellows, greens, blues, and purples in the rainbow. You have never seen such a beautiful, bright rainbow before. It makes you feel happy and full of good feelings just looking at it. You can see very clearly the beginning of the rainbow, so you decide to climb it. As you carefully start climbing, one foot in front of the other, you feel full of excitement. Where does the rainbow lead? You reach the top and you can see for miles and miles. The view is so beautiful, and you can feel the warm sun on your face and a cool breeze in the air. It is very quiet and peaceful. You notice the clouds have made shapes in the sky. Stay up here on the top of the rainbow and enjoy the view for as long as you like. When you are ready, slide down the other side of the rainbow and relax.

**Guided imagery example: A picture book**

Close your eyes and imagine you are turning the pages of a brand new picture book. Take a deep breath in and smell the new paper smell. The pictures in this book are beautiful, in such bright colors. Suddenly, you feel yourself floating into the book, and becoming part of the story. And the next thing you know you are in a park. The sky is a perfect blue and the green of the grass is beautiful, you see about a million different shades of beautiful green colors. The sun is shining and your body is warm and comfortable. You take a deep breath in and smell the freshly cut grass. You see trees along the edges of the park and you hear the chirping of birds flying overhead. You see squirrels playing chase around the trees. You see a dog chasing a squirrel. You see the biggest play structure you've ever seen in the middle of the park, with lots of kids playing on it. They smile and wave at you - they want to be your friend. You run over to play and you have so much fun with your new friends on this big play structure in the middle of this lovely park. You imagine you could stay in this beautiful park all day, and you can, anytime you want. All you have to do is close your eyes and imagine yourself there. Take this relaxed feeling with you as you roll over to your side and slowly sit up.

## Teaching Tips

**Manage your expectations.** Everyone (kids and teacher) will have a lot more fun if it is understood where a 2.5 yr old is at developmentally. Sitting still and paying attention are skills that are still being developed.

**Provide structure and routine.** Most everything is new for a toddler. Start and end yoga/mindfulness time the same way each week or stick to the same routine from week to week so that kids know and can predict what will happen next. When a toddler feels safe in a predictable environment their engagement and participation will increase.

**Keep your activities short.** Toddlers have a very short attention span, so if you keep your yoga and mindfulness time moving along by breaking things up into 5 minute (or less) activities you will be better able to hold their interest.

**Accommodate everyone.** When practicing yoga poses, if the kids in the class have varying levels of ability or flexibility, try to give easier or more challenging variations for the same pose so that everyone is successful in the pose.

**When practicing yoga poses, don't be afraid to let the kids see your physical limitations.** It's important they can see it's okay if they can't do a pose or something someone else can do.

**If someone doesn't want to participate, don't force them.** Allow them to take their time and just observe. They are taking in more than you think they are.

**Encourage kids to stay in a yoga pose longer by counting or using sound effects.**

**Try to think like a kid.** When practicing yoga, you can't just ask the kids to "now do the other side" because they won't remember which side they did 2 seconds ago. Consider using an object in the room as a frame of reference. For example, "point your foot toward the center of the circle", or "reach your arm toward the back wall". Consider using stamps, stickers or other ways to help kids know right from left. Instead of asking them to "put your right foot" forward, ask them to "put the foot with the stamp" forward.

**Be clear in your instructions.** For example, instead of saying "do it like this" while you show them a yoga pose or movement, say "reach your arms up high as if you are trying to touch the ceiling".

**Show by example and not by adjusting.** At a young age the real purpose of yoga is to introduce kids to and familiarize them with the basic concepts of the practice. Teaching them to breathe, relax, balance, try, and be good to each other is more important than getting a 90 degree leg bend in Warrior 2 pose.

**Don't over explain.** At a young age it's not as important that the kids know why they are doing something, just that they are doing it and therefore reaping the benefits.

**Encourage awareness.** Ask kids to notice and voice what they are feeling and experiencing in their bodies.

**Kids yoga is louder, sillier, more fun and less structured than adult yoga.** You may ask them to be a tree and they will all decide to be hopping trees, laughing madly as they hop on one foot. This is them practicing balance and finding their strength. It looks different than an adult yoga class and that's okay.

**Keep a record** of yoga poses, lesson plans or mindfulness activities so you can use them again. Repetition allows for refinement.

**Be flexible.** Don't take yourself too seriously. If something you try isn't working just move on to something else.

**Be a source of steadiness and calm.** Kids will copy you, so model the energy level you'd like to see. Show them you are calm and they will be too. Lowering your voice and speaking more slowly will help kids settle down. Practice patience and try not to get angry or frustrated. Allow kids to be themselves and true to their individual nature. Strive for compassion for their moods and sensitivities.

**Notice everyone.** Be sure you are not just paying attention to the loudest kids or the ones who are having difficulty.

**Relaxation and guided imagery is quiet time.** It's okay if someone doesn't want to lie down or relax, but they can't disturb others from doing so.

**Treat everyone equally.** The principle of fairness is very important to kids.

**Don't give instructions when no one is listening.** You will be wasting your breath.

**Be clear in your language.** Be sure your language is reflective of the age group you are teaching. Use age appropriate words.

**Be fun.** If you want to hold a kid's attention, turn your lesson into a game. You can teach a toddler anything as long as you combine the lesson with something colorful, bright, shiny, silly or otherwise engaging.

**Go with the energy of the kids.** If what you are doing isn't working, drop it no matter how much time you've invested in planning it and do something else. You can always go back to it another time.

**Be positive.** Avoid negative words and phrases like “no”, “don’t”, “wrong”, “not like that”. Use more positive alternatives such as, “you can”, “you should try”, “I know you can”.

**Always praise effort.** Turn mistakes into positive experiences.

**Be decisive.** Discipline can become an issue when the teacher is not clear about their expectations, or is unable to communicate them clearly. Setting up expectations in advance, and reviewing what comes next in a yoga or mindfulness lesson will lead to a more positive experience for everyone.

**Create rules and keep them.** If you break your own rules or allow kids to break your rules without consequence, kids will learn there are no rules and that they can do whatever they want. Kids like to know what’s expected of them, and rules and boundaries help them to feel safe.

### **Have self confidence**

Even if you have no clue what you are doing it’s important you give the kids the impression you are fully in control and can manage any situation.

**Keep going.** If you hesitate or seem unsure of what to do next you will lose the kids’ attention. Don’t give the kids any time to think about anything except what they are doing at that moment. Keep things moving along.

**Avoid criticism.** Instead of telling kids what they can’t do, tell them instead what they can do. Instead of saying “Do not interrupt me when I’m talking,” try saying instead “If I am talking and you have something to say, please raise your hand and I will call on you when I’m finished.”

**Give choices instead of punishment.** For example, “You can either keep your hands and body off Sam, or you can sit next to me. What do you choose?”

**Change the volume of your voice.** Instead of raising your voice to match an increasing noise level in the room, lower it so that the kids have to be quiet to hear you. Speak more slowly. Over exaggerate deep breathing.

**Change the energy often.** Move frequently between active and passive poses or high energy and calming activities.

**Listen.** Kids have great ideas. Allow room for them to add their creativity and imagination. Paying a little extra attention and allowing kids to make choices will lead to more cooperative behavior. Be open to learning from everyone and use their ideas.

## Beach Adventure

A yoga lesson plan

Ages: 3 and up

30-45 minute class

With a lesson plan like this one ask kids for suggestions and choose poses based on their ideas. Be sure you have memorized a solid base of beach related yoga poses so you are prepared for whatever ideas the kids have. You can also ask kids, “what do you think octopus pose looks like?” if you don’t know, and then use their ideas. The great thing about a class based on an adventure is that you can do more or fewer poses so the class runs shorter or longer depending on how much time you have for class. It can also be more fun by making animal noises and other sound effects.

### Welcome/Opening (5 mins)

You can begin by asking kids who has been to the beach. You can ask them what are some things they like to do at the beach.

### Breathe (5 mins)

**Ocean breath** - Close your eyes and cover your ears with your hands. Begin breathing in and out and imagine you are at the beach and listen to the ocean waves in your breath. As you breathe in imagine the waves coming closer to you, and as you breathe out imagine the waves are white drawing back into the ocean.

**Ocean breath** (2nd option) - Breathe in and bring your fists to your chest. Breathe out, slowly, and extend your arms and open your fists, shooting out water like waves in the ocean.

Whoosh...in, out, in, out....

### Poses (10-20 mins)

Decide how you will get to the beach and what you will see and do once you get there. Let the kids contribute their ideas and if kids suggest things not normally found on the beach just go with it!

How will you get to the beach? Some options:

- **Helicopter**
- **Bicycle**
- **Hot air balloon**

What do you see in or near the ocean? You can ask kids for suggestions or decide in advance. Here are some ideas (all the poses can be found in this manual)

**Crab** - In crab pose you can crab walk side to side, forward and backward. You can give high fives to your crab friends - with your feet of course! **Dolphin**, **Turtle** - you can hide in your turtle



shell. Slowly peek your head out, then hide back in your shell. **Shark** - Don't forget to show your shark teeth. **Lobster, Seal, Whale** - In whale pose place the base of your hands on top of your head like a blowhole. Breathe in, and when you breathe out pretend to splash water out of your blowhole.

### **What can we do in the ocean?**

Go water skiing - **Water skiing pose** (Warrior 2 pose) - You can play the song Surfin' Safari by the Beach Boys and act out paddling out on your surfboard and standing (warrior 2) and (peaceful warrior) to ride the waves. Go swimming - **Swimming pose** (Locust pose) **Optional Prop** Bring a spray bottle of water and give kids a spray while in the pose. Pretend it is spray from the ocean. Go for a boat ride **Boat pose or Partner boat pose**

On the beach we can relax in our beach chair - **Chair pose** We can dig in the sand - **Digging in the sand pose** - Step your feet apart, bend at the waist and bring your hands to the ground. Make digging motions with your hands.

### **Yoga Game (5 mins)**

Pretend to be dolphins jumping in the water (hula hoop game)

### **Relaxation (5 mins)**

Pretend your yoga mat is your beach towel and lie down in starfish pose (arms and legs out wide). You can play music of ocean waves or give kids the jellyfish test. Gently lift their feet and wiggle them to see if they are floppy like jellyfish. If their legs are stiff, softly encourage kids to relax their legs. You can give foot rubs or talk through a guided imagery of lying on the beach listening to the waves and the seagulls overhead while smelling the salty sea air or their sun tan lotion.

### **Closing the Class (1-2 mins)**

Ask the kids how they are feeling.

# Jungle Adventure

A yoga lesson plan

Ages: 3 and up

30-45 minute class

## Welcome/Opening (5 mins)

Begin class by telling kids you will be going on a jungle adventure in class. Sometimes seeing wild animals can be scary, but taking a few deep breaths will help the scared feeling go away and help us feel calm. Use your **Hoberman Sphere** and guide the kids through a few rounds of deep breathing. When you're finished ask kids if they feel scared ....(they will all say no!)

## Optional warm up (5 mins)

Play Kira Wiley's Dance for The Sun and do the sun dance together.

## Poses (10-20 mins)

Now that you've warmed up you can take your adventure to the jungle. Decide how you will get to the jungle:

- a boat? Sing row, row, row your boat while holding boat pose
- an airplane? Playing The Airplane Song by Laurie Berkner works great here
- fly on butterfly wings? Play the song Fly Like A Butterfly by Shakta Kaur Khalsa

Now that you have arrived at the jungle, put your binoculars on and look around to see what you find (make circles around your eyes with your hands) and have fun in the poses. Here are some ideas:

**Lion** - you can do Lion's Breath. **Elephant** - elephants walk together by holding the tail of the elephant in front of them with their trunk. Kids can get into a line, the first kid bends over and puts his arm (his elephant trunk) between his legs, the next kid holds the hand of the person in front of him and put his other hand between his legs so the kid behind him can hold his hand, and so on until you make a line of elephants holding tails with trunks. Walk around the room making elephant noises. **Monkey** - reach up to grab a banana. Pretend to eat the banana.

**Snake** - take several deep hissing breaths **Frog** - can you all take 5 hops together while counting to 5. **Trees** - can do partner tree pose or make a forest of trees by standing in a circle and holding hands while everyone comes into tree pose. **Koala Bear** - You can be a koala bear in a tree by hugging your arms around your body while in tree pose. Other pose ideas: **spider, turtle, lizard, flower, rainbow.**

## What can you do in the jungle?

You can sneak up on a sleeping tiger and pet his tail. On hands and knees stretch one arm out at a time, like you are quietly sneaking up on the tiger. Option to stretch the opposite leg out at

the same time. The tiger is sleeping (child's pose) so we reach out to pet his tail by stretching one arm forward and the opposite leg back (that's our tiger tail) bending our leg and trying to touch our foot - that's the tiger tail. Shhh...don't wake up the tiger.

**Fun in this pose.** The teacher can call out "the tiger is sleeping" and kids come into child's pose. Then the teacher can call out "the tiger wakes up" and kids come on to hands and knees and make the sound of a tiger. Do this as many times as the kids want...they will want to do it over and over.

### **Yoga Game (5 mins)**

Freeze dance is a fun game for this age group. Put on some upbeat music and when the music stops kids have to freeze in one of the poses they just learned.

### **Relaxation (5 mins)**

Have kids lie down and play some relaxing music while giving kids foot rubs. (You can play The Lion Sleeps Tonight) When the song is over, ask kids to wiggle their fingers and their toes before rolling over and sitting up.

### **Closing the Class (1-2 mins)**

Ask kids how they feel. Give everyone a sticker of a jungle animal.

# Pirates

A yoga lesson plan

Ages 3 and up

30-45 minutes

## Welcome/Opening with a breathing exercise (5 mins)

Today in our yoga we are going to be pirates looking for treasure. We'll start in criss-cross with a few **belly breaths** to get us ready for our adventure. But first, ask kids what a pirate's favorite letter is. It is R (*that's a joke, haha*)

## Poses (20-30 mins)

First, we'll learn pirate pose. We start by standing tall in **mountain pose**. Pirates have a lot of strength, so find the strength in your body to stand tall and strong.

For pirate pose we take a step back with one leg, turn our back foot out, bend our front knee and bring our arms to the sky - **warrior 1** - on the count of 3 we're going to make fists with our hands and bring them down in front of our chest and make the sound of a pirate, 1, 2, 3 "aarrgghhh".....then we step our feet together, pause, feel our strength, and we do pirate pose on the other side.

We're off to find some treasure- **walking** by standing on one leg, lifting the other leg and swinging it back and forth, (so the kids are walking with one foot remaining on their mat), then swing the leg side to side across the front body, you can swing your arms as well. Continue for a few breaths and "oh no, we're going the wrong way!" and switch sides.

We come to a big boulder (**standing arms overhead making a circle, or horse stance**) on the path and we have to push it out of the way.

Step your feet together, bend your knees a lot, so that your fingertips touch the ground next to your feet, and take a big step back. **Low lunge**. To push, we all count to three and on three we lift our arms like we are pushing a rock. It's heavy, (or not everyone helped) so we try again **low lunge on the other side**.

We are so strong the rock goes rolling away and smashes into our pirate ship, so we need to build another one. We get wood from trees in **tree pose**.

We get out our toolboxes - **butterfly pose** - and look in our toolboxes for our hammer **folded butterfly**.

We take our hammers and do some hammering. (**standing, feet apart, arms together overhead, bring them down to the ground while saying "bang"**)

We get out our toolboxes again - **butterfly** - and look deep inside **folded butterfly** to get out our saw, and saw some pieces of wood (**cradle leg in arms with foot in elbow crease and knee in other elbow crease and move back and forth like sawing motion**) The great thing about our toolboxes is we have a spare saw when this one gets dull we use the other one- **sawing pose with other leg**.

Now we have to screw it all together. We get out our toolboxes again **butterfly** - and silently count out 10 screws (or however long you want the kids to remain in their **folded butterfly**) . We put our feet on the ground and our knees in the air and begin to screw **boat pose with hands under knees while moving feet from side to side** - Who wants to try screwing with no hands? **Boat pose with arms lifted**.

But before we get in our boats we see a bottle floating in the water - **locust** - so we swim out to get it -**swimming pose** - We bring it back to shore and sitting in a **squat** (which will help us round our backs after those backbends) we use our teeth to bite off the cap.

And we see inside is a treasure map with a big X - **star pose** - But we can't figure out which way it goes. So we turn the map to the side - **triangle** - and then the other - **triangle on other side** - and we see the treasure is inside a volcano at the top of the mountain - **mountain pose, arms overhead together like a volcano**.

So we hike up the mountain - **lift left knee to touch right elbow, lower and switch sides, continue a few times** - (this cross lateral movement is tricky for preschool age kids - give the option to touch their knee with their opposite hand instead of their elbow, which is easier)

Just then we see some warriors with bows and bananas instead of arrows, they must be after the treasure and are going to shoot us with bananas. We see them take a big step back with one foot and turn their back foot out. They have their arms straight out at their sides and we see them putting the arrow in the bow, and then they shoot at us, but they have terrible aim and they miss - **warrior 2, pull back arm back like pulling a bow - reverse warrior is arrow missing and going in the sky** - so we slowly back up and tiptoe away. But they shoot at us again! Now kids are at the back of their mats so they step forward with another foot for **warrior, reverse warrior** on the other side.)

Just then we feel the ground start to shake - **kids shake their bodies like the ground is rumbling** - and the **volcano explodes**. We see gold coins and other treasure flying in the air this way and that - **standing crescent side bends**. So we step our feet apart and reach down - **straddle split** - to scoop up the treasure and put it in our pirate boots.

We quickly run down the mountain - **running in place very quickly** - and we get in our pirate ship - **boat pose** - and row away

But we hear a noise behind us “shhhhhh” (sit quietly and pretend to listen) so we look to see what it is (***seated twist both sides***) - and we see: It’s our ***parrot!*** We place our hands on our shoulders, hold our elbows out to the side and lift and lower our parrot wings.

**Relaxation (5 mins)**

Invite kids to lie down. Guide them through a short visualization...Imagine if you really were a pirate, and you really did find treasure. Who in your life would you share your treasure with? Imagine how they would feel if you shared your treasure with them. How would it feel for you to share with someone else? Imagine the good feelings you have in your body that come from sharing with others, and imagine how it feels for you when someone shares with you

**Closing the class (1-2 mins)** Ask kids to share with the group who they would share their treasure with.

# Birds

A yoga lesson plan  
Ages 3 and up  
30 - 45 mins

## Welcome/Opening (5 mins)

Today's class is all about birds. You can ask kids if they could be any kind of bird, what kind of bird would they like to be. You can ask kids what their favorite color bird is. Or you can ask kids to name as many different kinds of birds as they can. You can also bring pictures of the birds and share facts about each bird as you do the pose.

## Breathe (2-3 mins)

Sitting on your heels, put your baby bird wings on (hands on your shoulders) and, moving with your breath, raise your wings (elbows) up and down very slowly, as if you were waking up in the morning and stretching your baby bird wings. Put your big bird wings on by stretching your arms out to the side and lifting your wings slowly up and down with your breath. Breathing in we lift our bird wings up, and breathing out we bring them back down again. You can also practice this bird breath while standing, breathing in as you stretch up, and breathing out as you come into a forward fold.

## Pose ideas (10-15 mins)

- **Hello birds!** - Step your feet apart and bring your hands down to the ground in a wide leg forward fold. Lift one arm up to the sky like you are peeking under your bird wing to see if there are any other birds nearby. If you see one you can wave to them. Say "hello birds!"
- **Flamingo** - Stand tall in mountain pose, place your hands on your hips and lift one bent knee like a flamingo. Balance. Do both sides. For fun in the pose flap your wings.
- **Rooster** - Begin in mountain pose. Put your left thumb on your forehead, and spread your fingers out wide. This makes a rooster's comb. Take your right thumb, and place it against your other hand on the pinky. This makes a rooster's waddle. Slowly bend forward and then come back up and say "cock-a-doodle-doo".
- **Ostrich** - (Pyramid pose) Begin standing with your feet slightly apart, and take a comfortable step forward with one foot. Reach your arms up to the sky, pretending they are your long neck and head, bend at the waist, and slowly fold your body forward over your front leg like you are burying your head in the sand. Do both sides.
- **Eagle** - Stand tall with your feet together. Hold your arms straight out in front of you, cross one elbow over the other in the shape of an x, bend your arms toward your body

and clasp your hands. Bend your knees slightly and try to wrap one foot around the other. For a challenge try to bend forward and touch elbows to knees and then stand straight up again, finishing by spreading your wings (arms) out to the side.

- **Bird egg** - (Child's pose) Sit on your heels, bend forward over your thighs and place your forehead on the ground. Tuck your hands under your forehead. Imagine you are breaking out of your shell.
- **Peacock** - Lie back on your elbows and lift your feet toward the ceiling. Open and close your peacock feathers (your legs).
- **Penguin** - Lie on your belly with your arms alongside your body. Lift everything up like a penguin sliding across the ice on their belly.
- **Owl** - Sit on your heels and extend your arms slightly back, but in towards your body. Puff out your owl chest. Put both hands on one hip, twist to the side, and softly say "hoo hoo"

### **Yoga Game (5-10 mins)**

Give each student a feather. You can get a bag of colored feathers at the dollar store. Ask them to place it flat on their palm, and use their breath to make the feather wiggle without blowing off their palm. Once they can do this, ask them to blow it off their palm and catch it in their other hand. It will take control of their breath to blow it gently, and focus and concentration to catch it. Ask kids to pair up, with one student blowing the feather to the other who tries to catch it.

### **Relaxation (5 mins)**

Place the feather on your belly, close your eyes, and imagine you are a bird sitting in a tall tree high on top of a mountain. Slowly breathe in and out. Imagine what kind of bird you would be. What color are your feathers? The air is cool and you can see mountains in the distance. You are about to begin a journey and you feel excited about your flight. You imagine as you fully stretch your wings a strong gust of wind lifts you, and you begin to fly higher and higher. The trees and the mountain top are now far below you, and all around you can see the clear blue sky for miles and miles. As you turn into the wind you effortlessly fly with great speed. You feel the wind on your face as you fly, and as you fly through a cloud you feel a cool mist on your body that is so refreshing. The air is quiet all around you as you soar through the clouds. It is so quiet this high up in the sky that all you can hear is the sound of your own breath, as you slowly breathe in and out. You feel very happy and free, and so relaxed and peaceful. Take one last long breath in and let it all the way out, and then take that nice relaxed feeling that you have in your body, and keep it with you as you slowly sit up.

### **Closing the Class (1-2 mins)**

Ask kids how they feel.



## Props

**Breathing ball (Hoberman sphere)** - This gives such a concrete visual representation of the breath that most kids who see it instantly become calm just by watching it and then matching their breath with it. It's also great to give to someone who is having trouble settling down and needs a few minutes of focused, calming activity.

**Tibetan bowl or tingshas** (cymbals) - A beautiful, calming way to help with transitions, get everyone's attention, or bring the group together after a high energy activity.

**Tibetan singing bowl** - The sound and vibration impacts the nervous system and engages the relaxation reflexes. A great tool to turn focus inward and bring about a more calm and peaceful state of mind.

**Pinwheels** - A fun toy to use to become more aware of the breath.

**Feathers** - Great for teaching breath awareness. You can place them on the palm of your hand and blow just enough to move the feather without blowing it off your hand. You can blow to a partner to catch. You can try to keep it up in the air with your breath. You can also use it as a sensory/calming tool.

**Colored Scarves** - Turn on some music, give each kid a colored scarf and let them dance.

**Stamps (the ink stamp kind)** - Stamps on a hand or foot can be used as a great visual tool to help kids tell the difference between left and right, or to help remember which hand/foot/arm/leg they need to stretch or move next. Kids also love getting gifts, and a hand stamp is a cost effective way of giving something to everyone as a special treat or recognition for a job well done.

**Stuffed animals** - There are so many animal poses that stuffed animals are one of the best props to use to help teach yoga to kids. Stuffed animals can be placed on a belly and kids can move them with their breath. They can be placed on a body part in a balancing pose, or kids can pick an animal from a bag and create their own unique animal poses. They can be used in games - you can play music and kids can dance around, and when the music stops they do the pose of the animal closest to them. So many possibilities!

**Yoga cards** - The possibilities are also endless with yoga cards.

**Music** - Music is a great way to direct the energy of a group of young kids. You can play calming music during focus time or relaxation, or you can play upbeat music during games. There are also many bands now catering to kids that will direct them how to move, and even yoga related music as well. See the music resource list for some specifics. A Google search for "kids yoga music" will yield many results.

## Resources

### Books for Teachers

Itsy Bitsy Yoga - *Garabedian, Helen*

The Yoga Zoo Adventure Animal Poses and Games for Little Kids - *Helen Purperhart*

The Yoga Adventure for Children - *Helen Purperhart*

Yoga for Children – *Lisa Flynn*

### Books for Kids

My First Yoga ABC - *Christine Engel*

ABC Yoga - *Christine Engel*

Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing - *Christopher Willard*

Baby's Big World Yoga - *Jenny Burrill*

Breathe Like a Bear - *Kira Willey*

Calm with The Very Hungry Caterpillar - *Eric Carle*

Good Night Yoga - *Mariam Gates*

Good Morning Yoga - *Mariam Gates*

Llamaste and Friends: A Yoga Story - *Pat-A-Cake*

Little Yoga - A Toddlers First Book of Yoga - *Rebecca Whitford & Martina Selway*

Stretch - *Doreen Cronin*

Stretch: A Yoga Story with Poses to Learn for Kids- *Igloo Books*

Yawning Yoga - *Laurie Johnson*

Yoga Animals: A Wild Introduction to Kid-Friendly Poses - *Paige Towler*

Yoga Baby - *Amy Hovey*

Yoga Bug: Simple Poses for Little Ones - *Sarah Jane Hinder*

Yoga Frog - *Nora Carpenter*

Yoga Whale: Simple Poses for Little Ones - *Sarah Jane Hinder*

You Are a Lion! and other fun yoga poses - *Tae-Eun Yoo*

Zoo Zen - *Kristen Fischer Susi Schaefer*

### Card Decks/Coloring Books/Games

Alex Active Yoga Kids Activity Exercise Blocks

Be Good to your Body - Learning Yoga Coloring Book - *Roz Fulcher*

Body Poetry Yoga Cards - *Roylco*

Covelico Yoga Cards - *The Game*

Kids Yoga Adventure Deck – *Jennifer Carter Avgerinos*

The ABCs of Yoga for Kids Card Deck - *Teresa Anne Power*

Twist and Spell Exercise Cards - *Roylco*

Yoga Pretzels: 50 Fun Yoga Activities for Kids & Grownups

### **Card Decks/Coloring Books/Games (cont.)**

Yoga Spinner by Upside Down Games

Yogi Cards

Yogi FUN Kids Yoga Cards

### **Music**

Kira Wiley - Dance For the Sun

Kira Wiley - Mindful Moments for Kids

Karma Kids Yoga - Come Play Yoga

Sammie Haynes - I Grow with Yoga (The Warm up Song)

Linda Lara - Musical Yoga Adventures

Kidding Around Yoga - The Yoga Slide

Laurie Berkner Band – Lots of great songs: The Airplane Song, Moon, Moon, Moon, These Are My Glasses, etc.

Bari Koral - Fly Like A Butterfly

The Singing Walrus - Sun, Moon and Stars