

Sample Children's Yoga Class

Reprinted, by permission, from Kristin Akerele, MPH, RYT 200.

The following example is geared toward a children's yoga class for ages 6 to 12 years. It is included to give you an idea of the differences in format and function of a children's class as compared with an adult hatha class. Due to the more fluid nature of a children's class, no time indicators are given for the asanas. This sample is designed to take about 30 minutes, which is appropriate for younger children. For older kids, class may be extended by 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the students' attention spans. If you are interested in teaching classes to children, please pursue training with a certified children's yoga training school.

Children may begin practicing yoga at any age because their bodies tend to be flexible and their minds are open to learning new things. It is valuable to teach children basic breathing and meditation techniques at a young age because they can then use the techniques to deal with stress and difficult situations as they arise. The key to teaching yoga to kids is to make it a fun, creative experience for them! For example, because many yoga poses have animal names, it is easy to incorporate animal sounds into the practice to further engage kids. Children's yoga classes are often loud and lively, but everyone loves the quiet shavasana at the end.



1 Peace begins with me breathing—Sit in criss-cross-apple-sauce position. Breathe in through your nose and count to four, then count to four again when you breathe out. Feel your body relax as you breathe slowly and steadily. Now say, "Peace begins with me," counting each word out on your fingers, starting with your pinky touching your thumb (and moving to the third, second, and first finger, respectively, touching the thumb).



2 Cat and Cow—Make your body into a table so that your back is the flat tabletop and your arms and legs are the table's legs. Inhale and let your belly drop toward the ground. Breathe in through your nose as you look up to the sky and then say "moo" like a smiling cow. Now breathe out through your nose and make your back round like a cat and look at your belly button. Meow like a happy cat. Repeat "mooing" and "meowing" movements a few times.



3 Child's Pose—Come back to the table position and sit back on your heels. Move your knees wider apart and walk your hands forward. Bring your forehead down to the ground and let your body rest. Take a few breaths. Now breathe in and come back to the table position.



4 Downward-Facing Dog—Lift your tail up high toward the sky. Stretch your arms and legs and bark a few times! Now wag your tail back and forth and maybe pretend you are walking in place.



5 Forward Fold—Look between your hands and walk or jump your feet up to your hands. Hang forward and let your arms relax. Bend your knees a little if you like.



6 Mountain—Bend your knees a little and slowly roll up so that you stand tall, still, and strong like a mountain. Pretend that your feet are part of the earth and that nothing can move you. Keep breathing in and out through your nose.



7 Hello Sun—Reach your arms up high and look up, saying, "Hello Sun!" Stretch your fingers up high and imagine reaching the sky.



8 Forward Fold—Reach your arms out to your sides like wings and let your hands float down toward your feet. Hang forward and let your arms relax. Bend your knees a little if you like.



9 Monkey—Breathe in and bring your hands to your knees. Look forward with your back long and straight. Make monkey sounds, then bring your hands to the ground again. You may bend your knees.



10 Surfboard—Keep your hands on the ground and step your feet back one at a time into Surfboard (or Plank Pose.) Make your body one long line and squeeze your belly button in! Pretend you are riding strong and straight on a wave.



11 Cobra—Bring your knees down to the ground and put your hands under your shoulders. Hug your legs together so they look like a snake tail. Inhale and lift your chest up like a cobra. Hiss like a snake!



12 Downward-Facing Dog—Bring your chest back to the ground. Lift your tail up high toward the sky. Stretch your arms and legs and bark a few times! Now wag your tail back and forth and maybe pretend you are walking in place.



13 Forward Fold—Look at your hands and walk or jump your feet to your hands. Hang forward and let your arms relax. Bend your knees a little if you like.



14 Mountain—Bend your knees a little and slowly roll up so that you stand tall, still, and strong like a mountain. Pretend that your feet are part of the earth and that nothing can move you. Keep breathing in and out through your nose.



15 Rock and Star (partner pose)—Find a partner, and pick one of you to become a rock by bringing your body into Child's Pose. The other partner, the star, first sits softly on the rock, then lies back gently. The star reaches his or her arms out wide and shines! Breathe softly for five to ten breaths, then switch positions.



16 Tree (partner pose)—Stand in front of your partner in Mountain Pose. Touch palms with your partner. Each of you lifts one foot off the ground (you can do the same leg as your partner or the opposite leg). Put your foot on the inside of your other leg. Lift your hands together and use each other to balance. Imagine strong roots growing out of your feet and helping you stand strong. Now pretend that a strong wind comes up and blows you around while you try to keep your balance!



17 Froggy—Start in Mountain Pose with wide legs and point your feet away from each other a little. Bring your hands together in front of your heart and breathe out. Bend your knees so that your seat comes close to the ground. Keep your elbows inside your knees and jump around like a frog as you say "Ribbit!" Take five hops, then sit down on the ground.



18 Bridge—Lie down on the ground and bend your knees. Bring your feet back toward your seat. Rest your arms on the ground by your sides. Breathe out and lift your seat up high. Slowly bring your seat back to the ground and relax.



19 Happy Baby—Lying down on your back, bend your knees. Bring your knees toward your chin and hold onto your ankles or feet. Rock back and forth. Start to giggle and pretend to be a happy baby.



20 Final Relaxation and Cloud Pose—Lie on your back and stretch your arms and legs long on the ground. Inhale, scrunch up your face, and squeeze your fingers and toes. Squeeze all your muscles like you are cold and shivery. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze! Now exhale and relax your whole body. Wiggle your jaw from side to side and take a big yawn! Now imagine floating away on a soft, fluffy cloud and going to your favorite place. It could be the beach, the mountains, a park, a lake—anywhere you like! Breathe and relax! (When teaching younger children, it is best to read or to tell a relaxing story, such as the preceding, during this part of the class.)