

TEACHING ELEMENTARY AGE STUDENTS

○ Individual Yoga Poses

- Lotus
- Cat/cow
- Donkey kicks
- Frog pose
- Mountain
- Crescent moon
- Full moon (arms overhead in circle) – looks round
- Star
- Triangle pose
- Bold warrior (warrior I)
- Brave Warrior (warrior II)
- Story with ideas for asanas
- Snake pose
- Seal pose



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- Owl pose



owl

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- Butterfly
- Lotus
- **Balancing and focus exercises** – Instill self-confidence in students and increase ability to focus by doing these challenging, but very doable exercises (can modify for students with difficulties) – No judgment if student falls! Teach that we fall and we get right back up. Teacher can play around and

show how they fall and get back into the pose without any judgment. Learning to deal with frustrations and not be self-judgmental. Teaching perseverance and resiliency.

- Kids in table top and balance beanie baby or something on back can even try putting one arm forward and opposite back
- **Tree** (Kind of Tree – Elm, Oak, apple – what grows on trees?)
- **Eagle** (right under and right leg above and reverse left)
- **Dancer**
- **Warrior III**
- **½ moon pose (ardha chandrasana)**
- **Side plank** (variation with foot out in front if too challenging)

Partner and Group Poses

- **Partner Sitting Forward Bend Pose**



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- **Child Pose and Fish Pose (Balasana and matsyasana)**



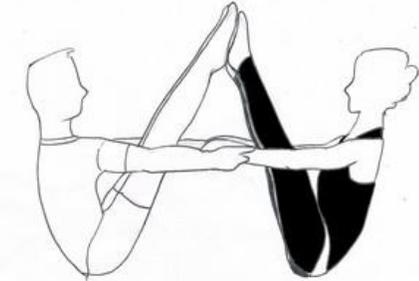
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- **Back to back chair and up and down** (arms interlaced – students try to stand up from a seated position)
- **Tree poses** (both sides)



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Double boat (knees bent, grab each others hands, feet touching)



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Wide legged forward bend



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Giggle Snake

- Lying in a zig - zag formation with head on the belly of the person before you.

- Start to laugh together – as you laugh your head also feels the person you are laying on laughing

Yoga Games – Fun for kids. Gets them moving around and working together. These activities are great for PE classes (especially those that require more space and a lot of movement) and after a long period of sitting at a desk, a big test, or a period of high tension/anxiety.

- **Elevator** – start in chair and yell lower one floor, up one floor (mimicking a squat motion)
- **Yogi Says** – same as Simon Says, but announce a yoga pose
- **Yoga Twister**
 - Just name the only body parts allowed to touch the mat (2 feet, one foot and one hand, knees and toes, tummy)
- **Yoga story time** – Combine writing with movement. Have students split up into groups and spend time creating a story that uses different yoga poses. Perhaps start with the following parameters:
 - At least two poses in every sentence – lots of up and down flow
 - 8-10 poses per story – Can hand each group a card with poses on it and ask them to construct a story using the words on the card. Have the groups swap stories and go through the poses while reading the stories.
 - Example yoga poses to hand students:
 - Lion/Bow/Arrow/Warrior
 - Table/Chair/Pretzel/ Lemon/Fish/Flower/Candle
 - Stork/Child/Happy baby
 - Tree/Mountain/Dead Bug/Butterfly/Flower/Lotus – transition to nighttime – star pose (count how many points the star has)
 - Cat/Dog
 - Fish/Boat/Turtle/Dolphin/Heron/Crab walking
 - Crow/Pigeon/Eagle/Heron
- **Yogopposites:**
 - Challenge your students by doing a forward bend and allowing them to try to figure out what a backward bend is
 - A Twist in one direction and then the other direction
 - Up/Down: Upward Dog/Downward Dog or arching the spine for Cow and rounding the spine for Cat pose
 - Backwards/Forwards: Camel/Child’s Pose
 - High/Low: Mountain pose/Rag Doll
- **Group Vinyasa Flow Sequences**
- 3 or 4 pose sequences – As a game, can challenge students as they become more familiar with yoga to come up with their own sequences linking breath to movement and teaching peers
- Tree/Dancer/Eagle
- Pigeon/Cow Face/Totally Cool Dismount/Cow Face/Pigeon
- Dancer/Toe Hold Twist/Knee Hug
- Crow/Chataranga/Upward Dog/Child’s Pose

- **Play Teacher**
 - Using a Yoga card deck, each child picks a card and teaches the pose, based on what is written on the card. Works best with older kids, ages 8 to 12. Especially as the class begins to study and practice yoga, this will help students to become more familiar with the poses
- **Non-Elimination Musical Yoga Mats:** (can use yoga mats, towels, anything that delineates a space – even hula hoops (if available))
 - A variation on the traditional Musical Chairs. You can use any fun upbeat song for this activity (“Jump in the Line”). You want the mats to be smaller, so I suggest folding them in half two times. To start put out enough yoga mats for everyone and then start to take a few away each time you stop the music. Talk about ways to include everyone and ask them how we can do this...hopefully they will suggest to share yoga mats...they love trying to fit as many kids as they can onto one or two mats. This exercise further helps to boost group morale.
- **Jump, Jump yoga pose** – have the students do two jumping jacks (or jumps if they are young and don’t quite understand how to do jumping jacks) and then yell out a yoga pose. Initially the teacher can be the person to yell out the yoga pose, but after a couple of exercises, the students can take turns yelling “jump, jump,” and then a yoga pose. All the students will follow into the yoga pose.
- **Red light, green light, yellow light** – This is a take off of the original redlight/greenlight. One student (the conductor) will be over at one end with their back turned to the other students and will yell out green light meaning that students should walk towards them, red light meaning that students should freeze and the conductor will yell out a yoga pose, and yellow light meaning the students need to tip toe slowly towards the conductor. The first person to tap the conductor becomes the new conductor. For an extra challenge, yellow light can be done with the students seated and their hands crossed in front of their chest and the students must “ant march” or scoot on their bottoms without using hands.
- **Throw the ball and person who retrieves the ball comes up with pose** (for a larger space and/or PE class or outside)
- **Breathing exercise** – students are each given their own feather (this works best on gym floor, not on carpet). Students place the feather at one end of the room and using each inhalation and exhalation, they focus on their breathing and blow the feather across to the other side of the room. The challenge is to see who can get their feather across the room first. This allows students to focus on their breathing and the efficacy of deep inhales and exhales when trying to move the feather across the room.

In General:

- Yoga can be incorporated into the elementary school day through individual exercises, which can be relaxing and therapeutic and provide students with skills that they can use at home or in the classroom when they are frustrated, tense, or angry.

- Yoga can be used in the classroom to build group morale either through partner poses or group poses. One group/partner pose (rotating different partners) can be done in the beginning of the day or at the end of a day as a nice closing or morning exercise for the class. Students are forced to interact with others they may not normally interact within the classroom as well

MEDITATIONS (see yogaforourlives.org for some example meditations and for some great books as resources for guided meditations)

- **Fingers Kiss Thumbs (PBWM – peace begins with me):**
- A good meditation for younger children. Some children have trouble understanding so I usually tell them to pretend that their thumb is giving each finger a big kiss. Together we move through the thumb giving each tip of the finger a “kiss” and then add the meditation out loud 3X, in a whisper 3X, and then to ourselves 3X; Peace begins with me – the thumb touches a different finger with every word and then repeat the cycle.
- **Guided meditations**
- **Loving-Kindness Meditation**
- **Acceptance Meditation**
- **Rainbow Meditation**

Combining Art with Yoga (there are many more ideas on Pinterest as well!)

- **Lavender Eye Pillows:**
- What you need: (per eye pillow)
- 1 clean adult size long sock (knee sock or long men’s sock works best)
- 2-3 tbsp. dried lavender (or a couple of drops of lavender oil mixed in with flax seed or rice). Mix the lavender with the rice and then put 1-2 cups of lavender rice in the sock and tie knots on both sides. A very refreshing and calming lavender pillow. Have students try out their lavender pillows when they feel stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious.
- **Mandalas: Mandala making can be used as a form of art therapy for self-expression, healing, and relaxation**
 - Mandala means in sanskrit “sacred circle.” As referenced in *Psychology Today, 2010*, Carl Jung is credited with introducing the concept of mandala to the Western world, believing that the mandala symbolize the total personality (the Self). The mandala was a unification of opposites, an expression of the self, and a summation of who we are. Art therapist, Joan Kellog devoted a lot of time to researching and theorizing the symbol of patterns, shapes, and colors in mandalas and how these characteristics relate to an individuals mental and physical state. Currently art therapists use the creation of mandalas to help individuals reflect, revisit experiences, and discover who we are in the present. The creative process of making a mandala and coloring a mandala can be incredible therapeutic and cathartic. Often mandalas are also used as visual aids for meditation.

- It is very easy to find blank mandalas online and show samples of how people have colored them. Have the students color their mandalas and pay attention to the intricate details of coloring and of their color choice. Why did they choose a color? What patterns do they see in the mandala? Have students be mindful of their art and their art-making decisions.
- **Group mandalas**
- This is a great activity as an end to a unit or as a semester long project or in an art class. Each student can be given the individual pieces of paper or fabric that are the same size and materials, markers, paints, etc. Provide many examples of different mandalas. Students can work on their mandalas at home or during class time. When students have completed their individual mandala, with paper punch holes and weaves in and out yarn as if knitting the mandalas together. If the students used fabric, sew the pieces together. Hanging the class mandala in the classroom in a calm/peaceful corner or a mindful area of the class is a great reminder to students about their work together, their group accomplishment, and their unity as a whole.
- **Wishing Stones:**
- 6-12 year olds. If possible, take a mindfulness walk outside and have the students collect one rock each that they will decorate. Can use paint pens or regular paint to decorate their rocks. Students can write on them words such as joy, peace, love, yoga or draw actual yoga poses. Use these rocks during svasana or a lying down mindfulness exercise of guided meditation. Have the rocks resting on their forehead, so all of their good thoughts would go into their rock. Students can store these rocks in their cubbies in the classroom and they can be used for visual meditation where the students are focused on the rock quietly for a period of time or again in svasana, a lying down pose at the end of a mindfulness or yoga exercise.