

ABC YOGA CLUB
Kids Yoga
www.abcYogaClub.org

Six benefits of yoga practice for kids:

Increased awareness, improved physical fitness, good posture, proper breathing, stress relief, and building confidence.

How does yoga help develop confidence in kids? Yoga counteracts the pressure kids can feel. Yoga isn't competitive. They're free to express themselves without fear of judgement or criticism.



Positive teaching techniques:

1. Help the kids in the group get to know each other. At the start of a new session of classes, I can have students sit in a circle and have each kid say his/her name and maybe some other little fact about themselves, such as their favorite color, favorite sport or favorite food.
2. Have a great start. Create a good atmosphere to begin the class. Start with brief breathing exercises to help kids shift gears from what they were doing before coming to yoga class and begin to tune into their breath, their bodies and enjoying the moment.
3. Eliminate the pressure to perform. Present yoga exercises and games in a warm, open manner. Emphasize the feeling in the pose, not perfecting the pose. Allow kids to start

by holding their poses naturally, in the way it feels best in their bodies, rather than worrying so much about how it looks. Encourage kids to appreciate what their bodies can do, rather than focusing on how it looks.

4. Emphasize the non-competitive nature of yoga. Give children positive attention. Help kids understand that everyone has different strengths and talents. Encourage kids to focus on enjoying the movement of each posture and doing what feels right for them.
5. Be clear about how I want kids to behave in class. Focus on how I want them to have rather than how I don't want them to behave. Remind kids that I expect them to be respectful and encouraging to everyone in class. If something happens that I don't like, remind kids how I expect them to act. Encourage kids to monitor their own behavior and let them know how yoga will help them develop their own inner discipline.
6. Encourage kids to pay attention to me and each other. Giving each other attention shows respect and helps children feel important. It creates a positive atmosphere where everyone can feel heard. The first day of class I can encourage students to pay attention to other kids by looking and smiling at others as they speak.

Six Principles of Alignment Listed and Explained:

1. Bend from the hip/thigh joint. During forward folds, it's important to have my students push their bottoms back and fold forward from their hips - maintaining a flat back as they lower their upper body down.
2. Standing tall. Notice how my students stand. Many kids stand with their bellies pushed forward (sway back) or with their upper back rounded. Remind kids to lift up through the top of their head as they stand, imagining they are trying to reach the ceiling with the crown of their head, while they press down slightly through their tailbone. I want them to lengthen their spine from their neck down through their tailbone. Learning to stand with a neutral spine early in life will help prevent back problems later in life for my students.
3. Shoulders back and down. We want to keep the shoulders relaxed and down away from the ears. This avoids tension in the neck and shoulders and keeps the upper back strong.
4. Head in line with spine. In most postures, it is safest for the neck to keep the head in line with the spine. Try to keep the head in a position that is a natural extension of the spine. This helps prevent any strain in the neck.
5. Knees in line with toes. When kids have their knees bent, they should be in line with their toes. This will reduce any strain on their knee and ankle joints. In lunges, make sure that students' knees do not move in front of the ankle - the knee should email directly over the ankle to prevent strain.
6. Finger and Toes spread wide. Remind kids to distribute weight evenly onto their hands or feet. Have them spread their toes first before placing weight on their feet and notice if their weight is evenly distributed - not too much weight in the toes or heels, or on one side of their feet. This will help balance the use of their muscles.



Eight Limbs of Yoga as Described by Patanjali:

1. Learning to live in harmony with others (Yama)
2. Keeping our body, mind and spirit pure (Niyamas)
3. Practicing physical postures to make the body strong and prepare the body to sit for meditation (asana)
4. Breathing properly in order to manage energy (pranayama)
5. Bringing our awareness inward, withdrawing our senses from the outside world (pratyahara)
6. Focusing our entire attention on a given object (dharana)
7. Resting in effortless meditation (dhyana)
8. Becoming one with the infinite (samadhi)

Five Principles of Yoga for Kids:

1. Proper exercise. This is achieved through yoga postures and yoga games. A well-rounded use of yoga postures work systematically on all parts of the body - stretching and toning all major muscle groups, keeping the spine and joints flexible and improving circulation.
2. Proper breathing. Remind my students to breathe fully and diaphragmatically, making use of all parts of their lungs, improving oxygen intake. Yoga breathing exercises help teach kids how to breathe fully and how to recharge their bodies or calm their mind through the use of their breath.
3. Proper relaxation. Having my students relax in savasana towards the end of class releases muscular tension and rests the whole system. It also helps their minds become more calm.
4. Positive thinking and meditation. Taking a few moments to practice visualization exercises or to have students simply observe their breath as it moves in and out, can help still the mind and bring about a more positive outlook, letting go of worry and anxiety. Help kids cultivate a sense of gratitude. Give them some time to focus on something that happened that day for which they are grateful.
5. A proper diet. Though diet is not part of your practice in my yoga class, it's well worth the time to talk to your students about good nutrition - eating a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables. Practicing proper nutrition can help kids have greater resistance to illness, maintain their energy and grow.

Class Format Outlined I Recommend for any Kids' Yoga Classes.

1. Warm-Up (Warm-up breathing and warm-up exercises)
2. Standing (Active) Postures
3. Yoga Games or Partner Activities
4. Sitting/Lying Postures
5. Relaxation, Meditation

Why I think it's important for kids to have both alone time and together time during their yoga practice?

Many kids rarely have the time to explore their inside world - to take the time to check in with their bodies and minds. We give kids this chance during the final four phases of a yoga class. Kids also need time to play and interact with the other kids in the class - being more active. This happens during the warm-up, standing postures and yoga games phases of class.

Why is proper breathing important in yoga practice?

The body depends on breathing for the intake of oxygen and the exhalation of waste matter in the form of carbon dioxide. Breath acts as a strong stimulus to the natural energy flow. Proper breathing can help immensely make you more energetic. In yoga, deliberate, deep, harmonious breathing is used to help overcome harmful emotional states.

Why should I encourage kids to breathe through their nose during yoga practice?

It helps filter the air they breathe, slow down their breath rate and keep their bodies warm. It also helps kids to focus and not to talk too much and helps activate the relaxation response.

What is diaphragmatic breathing? What are the benefits of breathing this way?

When we breathe naturally, the diaphragm moves down as we inhale. The downward movement of the diaphragm pushes the abdomen out slightly. Benefits of diaphragmatic breathing include: Energy efficient, enhances gas exchange in your lungs, calming/relaxing, activates the relaxation response, strengthens your diaphragm, increases lung capacity, enhances flexibility of ribs and spine, provides a gentle internal massage to abdominal organs, enhancing function of stomach, intestines and lymph system, and slow, regular breathing (done at last 10 minutes a day) can lower blood pressure.

What are the benefits for kids in practicing breathing exercises?

It slows down the breath rate (no gulping air through the mouth), it filters out impurities and dust before the air enters the lungs, it humidifies the air you breathe, it warms/cool the right to body temperature, and it activates the relaxation response. Yoga breathing exercises are an important way to warm up the body and to help students bring their focus to their yoga practice, as well as bring them into a more peaceful state and thereby experience the full benefits of their yoga practice.

What are the primary purposes of the respiratory system? What are the main organs of respiration?

Provide a means of gas exchange between the external environment and the body. The respiratory system provides a person with the means of replacing oxygen and removing carbon dioxide from the blood. Another purpose is to help maintain the acid-base balance (pH) of the blood.

The organs of respiration include: Nose, pharynx (back of the throat - connects nose with respiratory system), larynx (voice box at the top of the trachea), trachea (connects throat with lungs - made out of cartilage), bronchial tree (made up of bronchi, secondary bronchi, bronchioles and germinal bronchioles), alveoli (150-300 million alveoli with makeup 540 square feet of surface of respiratory tissue), and lungs.

What are the functions of the cardiovascular system? What are the organs of circulation?

The functions include: circulates oxygen and nutrients to the cells, carries carbon dioxide and metabolic wastes from the cells, protects against disease, helps regulate body temperature, and prevents serious blood loss after injury through the formation of clots.

The organs of circulation include: Heart (pumps the blood throughout the system), arteries (move blood away from the heart - pulmonary artery carry old blood CO₂ away to lungs), Arterioles (branches of arteries), capillaries, venules, and veins.

One of the Warm-up Breathing Exercises and Benefits and Steps to Practicing that Breathing Exercise:

Complete Breath (full yogic breathing): This is a slow, deep breathing that fills the lungs, so that the abdomen, rib cage and upper chest expand on the inhale and relax back into place on the exhale.

The benefits include: Exercises and aerated the lungs, quiets the mind, deepens relaxation, and increases circulation.

The steps include: Start sitting or lying on back, exhale completely, on inhale, first the abdomen expands with air, then the rib cage and then the chest (the inhale should feel like a wave of air rolling up the front of the body), exhaling completely, allow muscles to relax and slightly drop, repeat 8-10 times.

What parts of the body are warmed-up by practicing "Windshield Wipers?"

Front of thighs (quadriceps), knees and ankles, hips, and low back.

Five Warm-up Exercises that, put together, would warm-up the whole body. Discuss the different muscles that each exercise warms up.

1. Star/Moon God: Warms up shoulders, arms, upper back, legs, and hips.
2. Windmill: Warms up arms, shoulders, neck, back, and hips and legs.
3. Child's Pose: Warms up shoulders, hip, back, and knees.
4. Down Dog/Walk the Dog: Warms up legs, ankles, arms, shoulders, and back.
5. Hissing Snake: Warms up back, spine, torso, shoulders, and arms.

What are the reasons for doing warm-up exercises before starting your yoga practice? What is the main purpose of warm-ups?

Warm ups are valuable because they reduce the risk of pulling a muscle or injuring a joint during a yoga practice by increasing circulation and loosening up the major muscle groups. Warm-ups prepare our bodies for the stress of activity. They help prevent or reduce muscle soreness, muscle strains, and the tearing of muscle fibers or tendons. It's important to warm up each major muscle group before beginning a yoga practice, since you use all of your major muscle groups in a well-conceived yoga program. Warm-ups get the muscles ready for the action by increasing the speed at which they contract and relax and by mobilizing a greater number of motor units within the muscle.

The main purpose of a warm-up is to increase the blood circulation in order to raise both the general body and the deep muscle temperatures. This in turn helps to heat up the muscles, ligaments and tendons in preparation for more vigorous activity. Proper warm-ups can help reduce the severity of post-exercise muscle soreness.

What parts of the body are warmed-up by practicing "Hip Hinges?" What are some teaching points to keep in mind while students practice this exercise?

Back, hips, shoulders, knees, and wrists are warmed up by practicing hip hinges.

Remind students to keep their elbows straight throughout the movement. This will help to better warm up their shoulders. Many students may find it difficult to drop their hips to the floor, while keeping their arms straight. Encourage them to drop their hips not as much as is comfortable, while keeping their arms straight. Students should move slowly, connecting their movement with their slow, deep breath. They should pay attention to the signals of their body to avoid injury.

What parts of the body are warmed-up by practicing "Sun Flower?" What are some teaching points to keep in mind while students practice this exercise?

Hips, legs, arms, and shoulders are warmed up by practicing Sun Flower.

Many students bend forward as they squat down. Remind them to keep their head and chest lifted, so they are using their leg muscles and not placing any strain on their back. Check that students turn their feet out rather than keeping them facing forward. This helps ensure that their knees stay in the same direction and bend over their ankles, so there is no strain on the knee or ankle joint.

How can I help students find their best posture while standing in Mountain Pose (Tadasana)?

1. Roll back and forth on your feet (ball to heel) until you are over the center of your feet (neither leaning forward or back) and not on the outside or inside edges.
2. Imagine someone is pulling the top of your head towards the ceiling - this will help students lengthen their spines and not slouch.
3. Draw your shoulders back, then relax them down - this will help students bring their shoulders in line with the rest of their bodies, not rolled forward or squeezed back too far.
4. Imagine trying to drop your tailbone to the floor - this will help students bring their pelvis to a neutral position.
5. Have students focus on their breath in this position for a minute - this will help them become more aware of how proper posture feels.

6. Because you want your students to create a balanced vertical line, look at them from the side. Draw an imaginary straight line with your eyes, beginning with the students' ears. That line should pass down through the center of the shoulder, hip knee and ankle joints.

When are Sun Salutations traditionally practiced and why? What are the benefits of practicing Sun Salutations.

They're traditionally practiced at sunrise, when yogis believed the air to be rich in prana (cosmic energy). They're helpful in warming up muscle throughout the body before practicing and holding standing poses. They're an effective way to increase the suppleness of the spine and tone the entire body. Practiced daily, it brings great flexibility to the spine and joints.

What are the benefits of practicing "Standing Backbend?" How can I help students prevent back strain while practicing this posture?

The benefits include: Increases circulation to the spine, stretches shoulders, strengthens legs and back, and stretches and strengthens spine.

Instruct students to keep their hips pressed forward, belly tight and their knees straight. This helps to create more arch in the back, while preventing too much strain on the low back.

What are the benefits of practicing "Down Dog?" How far apart should students keep their hands in this position? How far apart should students keep their hands and feet?

Benefits include: Stretches palms, chest, back, hamstrings, alocs and feet, relieves low back discomfort, improves digestion, strengthens arms, wrists, legs and torso, energizes the body, and improves focus and stimulates the mind.

Students should keep their hands shoulder width apart, not too close or too far away. They should keep the distance between the hands and feet about the same as the distance from the student's heels to their tailbone (so the triangle formed is not too narrow or too wide).

What are the benefits of child's pose? What modification can students make if they find it hard to breathe in this position?

Benefits include: Relieves stress and anxiety, gently stretches the back, alleviates headache, and stretches the ankles, knees, and hips.

Suggest that students spread their knees apart to make more room for their belly, making breathing easier.

What are the benefits of "Airplane?" What parts of the posture would you emphasize to my students?

The benefits include: Improves balance, strengthens the legs and arms, improves posture and back strength, and improves flexibility of hips and legs.

I would emphasize for the students to move slowly, focusing on the feeling of the pose. Have them focus on the feeling of reaching forward with the hands and reaching back through the back foot, lengthening through the spine, and stopping at the point where they notice they are beginning to wobble or beginning to round their back.

What are the benefits of “Spinal Balance?” Practice this posture holding your back foot. What movements or changes in your position can you make that help you become more steady in this position?

The benefits include: Stretches shoulders and chest, stretches quadriceps, increases spinal flexibility, and improves balance and coordination.

Encourage your students to move slowly from the first form of spinal balance into the foot hold. If they find themselves start to wobble and lose balance, they should back off slightly, regain their balance, then try again to move slowly into the position.

What are the benefits of “Camel Pose?” Why is it important to have students practice child’s pose or some other gentle forward bend after camel pose?

Benefits include: Stretches the thighs, torso, chest, shoulders and throat, strengthens the legs, pelvis and lower back, aids digestion, stimulates circulation, and improves posture. It’s important to have students practice a counter pose, such as child’s pose, immediately after camel. The intense backbend of camel causes muscles to contract along the spine. Child’s pose gives these muscles a chance to relax and prevents muscle spasms or strain.

Why is it beneficial to include yoga games or partner postures in your yoga class? Name and describe three yoga games or partner postures that you could include in a class for 6-10 year olds.

It’s beneficial to include games or partner postures in my yoga class because it gives students opportunities to work in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. This helps children appreciate the fact that they can sometimes achieve more through working together than they can on their own. Doing group exercises helps to stimulate the students’ abilities to negotiate with and pay attention to each other, making them more aware of each other. In some group activities, kids are teaching yoga postures to each other. This helps them gain self confidence. Finally, games and partner activities help develop stronger friendships among the kids in your class, which makes it even more fun to come to class.

1. Funny Walks: This is a walking game that encourages kids to try a new way of walking, while developing leg muscle and coordination. The steps include: Have everyone stand on one side of the room, stand with feet hip distance apart and fold forward, place hands around your feet, keep your hands under your toes as you begin walking forward, and see if you can walk all the way to the other side of the room doing the Swamp Monster Walk.
2. Simon Says “Yoga Pose”: Steps include: Choose one student to be “Simon.” All other student stand in a line across, so they can all see “Simon.” “Simon” asks everyone to get into a pose by saying, “Simon says do pose.” Everyone gets into the pose, but only if “Simon says” has preceded the request. If someone gets into a pose and Simon didn’t say “Simon says,” then that student sits down until the next “Simon” takes their turn. After 3-4 commands, a new “Simon” can begin their turn.
3. Trees in a Forest: Steps include: This game is similar to the game, red light, green light. All students start on one side of the room in a line across that side of the room, and stand in tree pose. The teacher can act as the first lumber jack. The teacher stands in the middle of the room facing the students and says, “What a nice day in the forest. I

think I'll go for a walk." The teacher turns around with the back to the students and the students come out of the tree pose and begin walking towards the teacher. The teacher says, "What's that I hear?" And then turns around to face the students. The students must all get back into the tree pose in time or get "chopped" down, and sit down for one turn. Repeat this sequence for 3-4 times, or until one of the student reaches the teacher.

Lying postures are divided into two groups: 1) prone, 2) supine. What does it mean to lie in a prone position? A supine position?

Prone positions are usually done shortly after standing and kneeling poses, while the muscles are still warm. Prone (belly lying) positions are lying postures. Prone poses generally work on strengthening the muscles of the back and developing greater spinal flexibility. Supine positions are back lying postures. Supine and reclined positions are generally done as a cool down at the end of a practice. They reduce fatigue, increase mental clarity and open spaces within the body that are generally closed by tension.

What are the benefits of "Superman" pose? Why should you remind kids to squeeze their belly while in this position?

Benefits include: Strengthens the back, improves flexibility of the spine, increases arm strength, and relieves tension in the back. Reminding kids to squeeze their bellies while in this position will help to develop their core strength, while also protecting their low back from any strain.

What are the benefits of "Butterfly" position? How can you help students use their imaginations in this posture?

Benefits include: Stretches hips and knees, increases circulation to hips and legs, improves balance and coordination, and stretches hamstrings (big butterfly).

For imagination, have the younger students tell everyone what color butterfly they are.

What are the benefits of "Bridge" pose? Why is it best for students to try to keep their feet parallel (not turned out) in this position?

Benefits include: Strengthens the erector spinal muscles in the mid back and lower back, strengthens muscles between the shoulder blades, stretches chest and abdomen, improves flexibility of upper back and shoulders, and counters the effects of sitting for long periods of time.

When you teach your students to keep their feet parallel and the knees bent over the feet, you are teaching them to stabilize the pelvis in the backbend, because the external rotation of the thighs will no longer interfere with that movement. This will help them develop more core strength.

What are the two stress hormones? What are the physical signs that they are revving up the body?

Epinephrine (adrenaline) and cortisol are the two stress hormones. Signs they are revving up the body include: The pupils dilate, the palms sweat, breathing becomes shallow and fast, the hair rises, the heart beats faster and harder, blood pressure shoots up, digestion shuts down (so

more blood can be redirected to the extremities), insulin surges into the bloodstream, and blood flow is redirected to the large skeletal muscles of the body.

What are some of the effects of meditation and relaxation on the nervous system?

Some benefits include: Reduction or elimination of feelings of stress, improved emotional stability, decrease in depression and anxiety, improved concentration, stronger immune system, improved sleep, and increased alertness.

How do relaxation breathing exercises benefit kids?

Some benefits include: Relieves anxiety and stress, relieves muscle tension, increases body awareness, slow heart rate and blood pressure, improves breathing and lung capacity, eliminates headache, and brings you into the present moment, helping to relieve worries about the future or regrets about the past.

Explain the steps of one relaxation breathing exercise.

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana): Steps include:

1. Bring the right hand to your nose.
2. Place the right thumb gently on the right nostril and the right pinky and ring finger on the left nostril. Place the index finger and middle finger just above the bridge of the nose.
3. Exhale completely.
4. Block the right nostril with the right thumb, inhale left (inhale slowly to count of four).
5. Switch, releasing the right nostril and blocking left nostril, exhale right (slow, full exhalation).
6. Inhale right (full inhale to slow count of four or five).
7. Switch, releasing the left nostril, block the right nostril, exhale left, inhale left.
8. Switch, releasing the right nostril, block the left nostril, exhale right, inhale right.
9. Continue this pattern of breathing switching the side that is blocked after each inhalation.
10. Repeat for 8-10 breaths.
11. Make sure you are inhaling and exhaling slowly and completely.

What are the benefits of Savasana? How long should younger kids rest in Savasana? Older kids?

Benefits include: Removes fatigue, allows the mind to rest, relieves tension and anxiety, and improves sleep. Have students rest in Savasana for a few minutes (only a minute for younger kids, longer (3-5 minutes) for older kids.)

What is meditation?

Meditation is about cultivating inner silence and stillness - it's about noticing what is going on around you without reacting to it.

What are a few of the guidelines for practicing meditation with kids?

It is usually best to wait until kids are about seven or eight years old to introduce meditation practice to them. Introduce meditation little by little. Don't force kids to close their eyes if they don't want to do so.

What are the two main types of meditation exercises?

Those that focus on tuning into your surroundings and those that focus on your inner world. Always start with those exercises that help kids tune into their surroundings.

Explain the “Video Head” meditation exercise.

This is a simple meditation game that was developed by Valentino Giacomini at the Alice Project in India. For part of the exercise, kids will either need a partner or a pen and paper. Random objects can be placed on a tray, which then are shown to a group of kids for up to one minute. The kids then see how many of the items they can “record” and remember. Steps include; Sit in a comfortable position and imagine that you have a video camera in place of your head. Quietly begin to “film” whatever you see in front of you and to the sides. Remember a video camera doesn’t think about what it sees, it just records what’s there. Do this for a minute or two. Then turn around, so you are facing the opposite direction, and tell your yoga partner (or write down on paper) what you just filmed. As you do this more often, you can begin to examine things in greater detail.

Explain the “Bubble Meditation” exercise.

You observe your own consciousness in a special way while interfering with it as little as possible. You meditate on the stream of your own consciousness. It encourages you to let go of thoughts more quickly and focuses on any thoughts. Steps include: Start in your sitting position for meditation. Take a few slow long breaths, focusing on your breath. Allow your breathing to become natural again. Picture yourself sitting in a field and imagine one large bubble at a time slowly moving from your head up towards the clouds. Each thought or feeling is pictured as a bubble rising into space, until it is no longer visible in your mind’s eye. It should only take about 5-8 seconds for you to place a bubble around your thought and have it ride into space until it is out of view. Wait for the next thought and observe it for the same amount of time and so on. Do not explore, follow up or associate to a bubble, just observe it with the background of “that’s what I’m thinking right now - interesting.” As one thought (bubble) passes out of visual space, you calmly wait for the next bubble. Try this meditation for a couple minutes.

The purpose of picturing your thoughts in a bubble and watching that bubble rise is to help you with two things: Keep your timing. You learn to simply contemplate each thought or perception for a short period of time and then to let it go. The second thing is the structure helps you look at each thought individually and not constantly feel you must find connections between them.

How many hours does the average child spend watching television each day? 3 How many hours does the average child spend each day on all media? 5 ½ hours

What is the minimum amount of daily activity a school age child should get? 60 mins.

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Class Schedule is Online.
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