



## **Kids Yoga Teacher Certification Program**

### **Section 5 Yoga Games and Partner Poses**

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

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## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Introduction**

Yoga with kids is all about imagination and creativity, and including yoga games in your class is a great way to have fun with yoga and get kids more fully involved. The type of games and activities you do will depend on the ages of your students. The funny walks and yoga games included in this section are usually best for preschool and elementary age students (age 3-12), while the partner postures tend to work well for both elementary age kids as well as teenagers (ages 6-15).

Yoga games and partner activities give students opportunities to work in pairs, small groups and as a whole class. Several of the activities will not work unless two or more kids cooperate. 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.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Funny Walks**

The following walking games encourage kids to try a new way of walking, while developing leg muscles and coordination. These walks are best for ages 3-12.

### **Swamp Monster Walking**



#### Benefits:

- Stretches low back
- Stretches hamstrings
- Develops coordination and balance
- Improves energy

#### Steps:

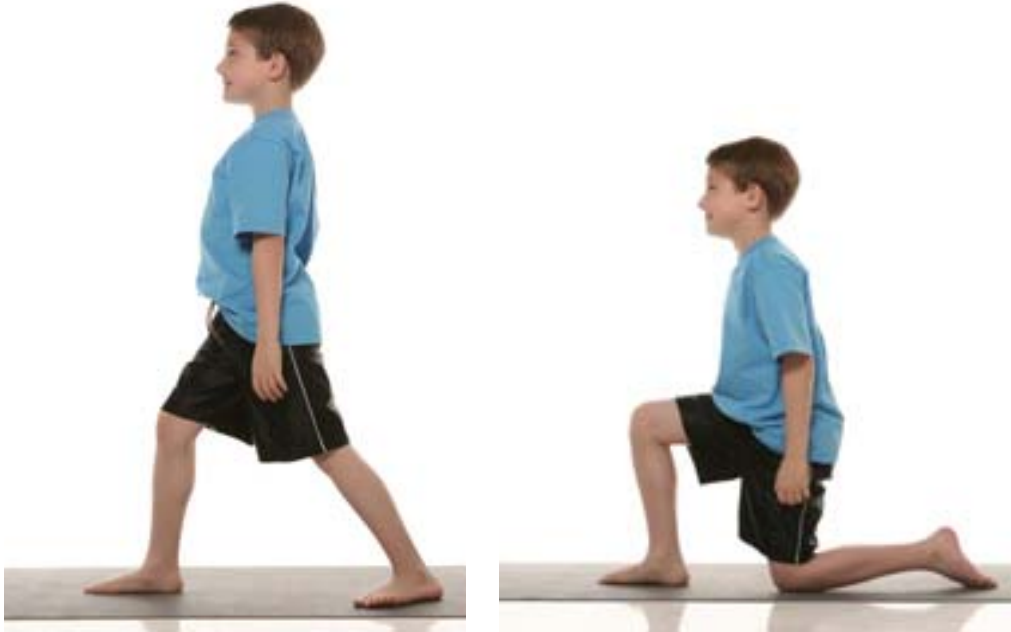
- Have everyone stand on one side of the room
- Stand with feet hip distance apart and fold forward
- Place hands around your feet
- Keep your hands under your toes as you begin walking forward
- See if you can walk all the way to the other side of the room doing the Swamp Monster walk

#### Teaching Points:

Remind students to really bend their knees to keep their back from becoming strained. Encourage them to use their imaginations and picture themselves as a real swamp monster.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Giant Walking



#### Benefits:

- Strengthens leg muscles
- Increases hip flexibility
- Improves balance and coordination

#### Steps:

- Start at one side of the room
- Have kids take a large step forward, then bend both knees, placing their back knee on the floor
- Straighten both legs, coming up to standing
- Step the other foot forward and repeat on the other side
- Continue walking this way for about 15 feet (or until you reach the other side of the room)

#### Teaching Points:

This activity is best done in a carpeted room or a room filled with mats. Skip this activity if kids will be forced to do it on a hardwood or cement floor. When trying this activity, encourage kids to drop all the way down to their knee, moving slow enough to maintain control.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Crab Walk



#### Benefits:

- Strengthens arms and legs
- Increases core strength
- Improves coordination

#### Steps:

- Have everyone start sitting on one side of the room, with knees bent feet on floor, and hands placed on floor behind you
- Lift bottom off floor, lifting your hips and belly up towards ceiling
- Walk hands and feet forward, moving towards the other side of the room
- Keep hips lifted until you get across the floor

#### Teaching Points:

Encourage kids to imagine they are crabs using their pinchers and to have fun, enjoying the movement and not being concerned about how fast they get across the floor.

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### Duck Walk



#### Benefits:

- Improves hip flexibility
- Increases leg strength
- Helps balance and coordination

#### Steps:

- Start standing with feet turned out
- Squat down
- Bring your hands towards your armpits
- Keep squatting as you walk forward and flap your elbows like wings

#### Teaching Points:

For younger kids, you can have them quack like ducks as they move across the floor. Encourage kids to not sit down, but to keep moving forward if they can.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Yoga Group Games**

The following group games encourage more interaction between students and involve the cooperation of teams or the entire class.

### **Yoga Cards (ages 6-15)**

#### Benefits:

- Gives students a chance to teach others and become more confident in their yoga knowledge
- Helps students practice speaking and presenting in front of others
- Improves knowledge of yoga names and postures

#### Steps:

- Place kids in teams of 3-5 kids per team
- Give each student a yoga picture card
- You have 1-2 minutes to read the card and learn as much as you can about the posture
- Each person then teaches the others in his/her group the posture on their card
- Once everyone in each team has taught their pose, then one group comes to the front, and each person in that group teaches each posture they have to the entire class.
- Continue with each group until everyone has had a chance to teach the class.

#### Teaching Points:

Be available to help the students as much or as little as they want to teach their posture to others.



## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Simon Says “Yoga Pose” (ages 3-12)**

#### Benefits:

- Improves students’ ability to listen to their peers and follow directions
- Increases knowledge of yoga postures and yoga names
- Gives kids a chance to lead the rest of the group and speak in front of the group

#### Steps:

- Choose one student to be “Simon” (make sure that everyone gets a chance – at this game or another game)
- All other students 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

#### Teaching Points:

Give kids some suggestions for postures before you start. You may also want to have a list of postures posted where “Simon” can see it. For younger kids, you (the teacher) should be Simon.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Alphabet Yoga (ages 3-12)

**Letter H**



**Letter t**



**Letter A**



#### Benefits:

- Improves cooperation and teamwork
- Gives students a chance to move their bodies in new ways
- Develops imagination

#### Steps:

- Demonstrate and have students practice different ways to use their bodies to make letters of the alphabet
- Group students into teams of 3-4 people
- Give each group a piece of paper with a 3-4 letter word on it (i.e. cat, van, lama, etc)
- Have each team spell their word using their bodies to illustrate each letter, and let the other students guess what letters they are making and the word they are spelling.

#### Teaching Points:

Make sure to take time to illustrate different ways to create letters of the alphabet before breaking into groups. Be available to help groups as necessary. For classes with younger students, you can do this as a whole class activity and spell out the words together (you showing them ways to do it). The following are some yoga poses and ways to create specific letters:

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

Bow pose = O

Child's pose = a

Tree pose = d or b

Mountain pose = l

Cat Flexes = m (belly dropped/head and chest up), n (back rounded, chin to chest)

Boat = V

Sunflower (in standing position) = X

Up Dog = J

Airplane = T

Sandwich (sitting position – head and chest raised and arms overhead) = L

Sandwich (sitting position, but rounding back, chin to chest arms forward) = C

Standing in straddle (feet apart), placing your hands together overhead (volcano) = A

Standing with feet together and arms out to sides at shoulder height = t

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Trees in a Forest (ages 3-11)**

#### Benefits:

- Helps students develop greater body control
- Helps improve reaction times
- Improves focus and ability to pay attention

#### Steps:

- 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 their back to the students and the students come out of 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 tree pose before the teacher turns around. The students who don't get back into tree pose in time get "chopped" down, and sit down for one turn.
- Repeat this sequence for 3 or 4 times, or until one of the students reaches the teacher.

#### Teaching Points:

This game can get very active and kids tend to laugh a lot when playing this game, so make that when you play this game you have plenty of time after finishing, so that kids will have time to settle down before moving into the more quiet and inward part of their practice.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Duck, Duck, Yoga Pose (ages 5-11)**

#### Benefits:

- Encourages students to pay attention
- Improves reaction time
- Gives kids a chance to decide which yoga poses are practiced
- Fun way for kids to get to know each other

#### Steps:

- Students start sitting in a circle (legs crossed)
- Pick one student to be the duck
- That student walks around the outside of the circle and says “duck, duck, duck” as they gently tap each student on the head.
- Then, at some point, instead of saying “duck”, the student says the name of a yoga pose (i.e. down dog)
- The student whose head is touched when the yoga pose is named gets up and chases the other student around the circle all the way back to his/her spot, while the other students get into the yoga pose
- Repeat with other students taking a turn as the “duck”

#### Teaching Points:

Make sure that all students get a chance to participate by having the “duck” pick a new person each time. After the students run around the circle, and before another student is the “duck”, have all students practice the pose another time and mention a few points of proper technique and benefits of the posture.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### **Musical Mats (ages 3-11)**

#### Benefits:

- Encourages kids to listen closely to music
- Kids get to tell and teach others their favorite yoga pose
- Helps develop quick reactions

#### Steps:

- Fold yoga mats into thirds and place the mats in a circle (use one less yoga mats than the number of students)
- Have students stand in a circle on the yoga mats
- Begin playing music and have kids walk around the mats as they listen to the music
- When you turn off the music, everyone must sit down on a mat
- You will have one more student than the number of mats
- The student who doesn't find a mat to sit on, gets to be the leader. They get to teach the rest of the class their favorite yoga pose, then be in charge of playing the music for the next round.
- Take one more mat away and repeat
- Continue through 4 or 5 rounds

#### Teaching Points:

It's important to make it fun and rewarding for the kids who don't make it to a mat by giving them a chance to teach their favorite yoga postures to the rest of the class and still being involved in the game by playing the music.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Partner Poses and Activities

These postures give kids a chance to work in pairs. Before doing any partner poses, make sure you have an even number in your group. It's okay to have an odd number of kids if one of the taller kids will be happy to be your partner. Then have the kids line up from shortest to tallest and pair kids up according to height. For older kids (over age 9), you may want to pair girls with other girls and boys with other boys – some kids during adolescence may feel uncomfortable with a partner who is the opposite gender.

### Mirror Your Partner (ages 6-15)



#### Benefits:

- Improves hand eye coordination
- Develops cooperation and focus
- Helps students get to know each other

#### Steps:

- Have students sit facing their partner
- Choose one partner to be the leader for the first round (the other partner will be the leader for the second round)
- Partners place their hands together (palms to palms)
- The leader begins moving his/her hands, while the partner tries to stay with the leader's movements.
- Continue for about a minute
- Switch leaders and do once more

#### Teaching Points:

Encourage students to move their hands in all different directions (up, down, side to side and forward, back) and to change the speed of their movements (fast and slow).

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Variation:

#### **Back To Back Mirror**



### Steps:

- Partners start sitting back to back
- Bring your hands out to the sides with your palms facing forward
- Bring the backs of your hands next to the backs of your partner's hands
- Inhale, slowly raise your arms, keeping the backs of your hands (or arms) touching
- Exhale, slowly lower your arms down together
- Move and breathe in unison with your partner
- Repeat the up and down movement of your arms 4-6 times
- Drop your arms down to your sides and shake them out



## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Partner Tree (ages 6-15)



#### Benefits:

- Helps with balance and poise
- Strengthens your legs
- Improves posture
- Calming for mind and body

#### Steps:

- Stand with your feet together
- Shift your weight onto your left leg
- Spread the toes of your left foot into the floor to feel grounded
- Find a point in front of you to focus on
- Become as still as possible
- Lift your right foot and place the sole of your right foot on your left leg, anywhere from your ankle to your thigh (wherever you can remain balanced)
- Stay here for 3-4 slow breaths
- Lower you right foot
- Repeat on the other side

For partner tree, stand side by side, place outside foot on standing leg and bring outside hands together in center

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Partner Seated Twist (ages 6-15)



#### Benefits:

- Stretches spine and upper back
- Improves coordination and left/right direction
- Develops cooperation and teamwork skills
- Improves awareness of others

#### Steps:

- Partners start sitting back to back with legs crossed
- Each partner places their right hand on their left knee
- Each partner then turns to the left and places their left hand on their partner's right knee
- See if you can feel your partner's breath through the movement of their back and try to breathe together (inhaling at the same time and exhaling at the same time)
- As you inhale, sit up tall
- Exhale, twist a little further
- Stay in this position for 3-4 breaths
- Release your hands from your legs and turn back to center
- Repeat on the other side

#### Teaching Points:

Encourage students to tune into their partner's breathing. This takes focus and concentration and will help students be fully engaged in the activity and learn to be present in the moment.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Partner Straddle Flow (6-15)



#### Benefits:

- Improves coordination
- Develops teamwork skills
- Stretches hips and hamstrings

#### Steps:

- Partners start sitting face to face
- Place legs into a straddle position – not too far apart – with knees bent
- Partners place soles of feet together and hold hands
- One partner leans forward as the other partner leans back
- Continue moving back and forth – about 6-8 times

#### Teaching Points:

Instruct students to keep their knees bent. This will help prevent students from overstretching or straining the muscles in their legs.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Partner Straddle Balance (ages 6-15)



#### Benefits:

- Improves balance and coordination
- Develops teamworking and communication skills
- Strengthens and stretches legs
- Develops core strength

#### Steps:

- Partners start seated facing each other with knees bent and feet a little further than hip width apart
- Partners place feet together – sole to sole, and hold hands – arms between legs
- Press feet against each other and slowly try to raise legs
- Stay in this position for 4-5 breaths – or however long you can hold it

#### Teaching Points:

Remind kids to move slowly and to not raise their feet too high when they first try this exercise. Also, remind them to sit close enough, so they must bend their knees a lot before lifting their legs up. Starting with your legs too straight makes this exercise much more difficult.

## Section 5: Yoga Games and Partner Poses

### Heads and Feet Together (7-15)



#### Benefits:

- Develops core strength
- Improves coordination
- Develops communication skills
- Stretches hamstrings and hips

#### Steps:

- Partners start lying on their backs with the tops of their heads just touching each other
- Partners hold onto each other's elbows
- Bring knees to chest
- Exhale, extend legs straight up, then reach your feet back until they touch your partner's feet
- Stay in this position for 4-5 breaths, straightening out your legs a little more with each exhalation.
- Bring knees back to chest, then back to the floor
- Repeat one more time