

Healthy Living: Yoga for Kids Basics

Lisa Washburn, DrPH
Assistant Professor -
Health

Lauren Copeland, B.S.
Program Technician -
Health

Jessica Vincent, M.Ed.
County Extension Agent -
Family and Consumer
Sciences

Introduction

Practicing yoga is a fun and easy way to help children and adolescents increase physical activity levels. Yoga is a type of exercise that combines breathing, physical postures and mindfulness to help strengthen and calm the body and mind. Practicing yoga builds strength, flexibility and confidence. The focus on breathing promotes relaxation.

General Instructions for Doing Yoga

Some poses work only one side of the body at a time. It is important to balance each pose in your routine with a complementing pose.

For example, if you do:

- A pose standing on your right leg (e.g., Tree), you should also do the pose standing on your left leg.
- A pose with your right leg in front of your left (e.g., Warrior I), you should also do the pose with your left leg in front.
- A twisting pose (e.g., Lying Twist) to the right, you should also do the pose twisting to the left.
- A pose with a backbend (e.g., Camel), you should also do a pose with a forward bend (e.g., Extended Child's Pose).

Safety First

Some yoga poses are not suitable for everyone. There are health issues that can increase your risk for injury.

Such poses are considered to be "contraindicated." Contraindicated simply means there is indication, or a reason, to withhold from a certain treatment – or in the realm of yoga – a certain pose. In addition to the general yoga safety tips, always check with your doctor to make sure yoga poses are appropriate if you have any health concerns. These could include, but are not limited to, asthma, heart disease, high blood pressure, knee pain, low back pain, neck pain, pregnancy or shoulder pain.

Yoga Safety Tips

Yoga promotes strength, muscle stamina, structural alignment and flexibility and calms the nervous system. It can be practiced by people of all ages and abilities. Injury can happen with any form of exercise. To avoid injury:

- Always warm-up the body first.
- Stay within your limits by choosing poses that match your fitness level. Start with basic poses, and know what your body can and cannot do.
- Avoid poses that require you to put your body and joints at extreme angles.
- If a pose feels painful, stop doing it.
- Yoga is not a competition. Do not compare yourself to others around you.
- Gradually increase intensity. Start by holding basic poses longer to build strength and stamina before further extending the pose or trying a more difficult pose.



Visit our web site at:
<http://www.uaex.edu>

Safety Tips (continued)

- Avoid bouncing or jerking into a pose.
- Keep your knees and elbows loose or slightly bent.
- Remember to breathe through each pose.
- When doing balance poses, find a focal point on the wall or floor or place your hand on a wall, table or chair to help prevent falls.
- Wear comfortable clothing that you can move in easily and will keep you covered when you bend down.

Sample Routine

The routine outlined here can be used in many settings. You may opt to use the sequence of poses as written, or adjust by omitting some poses to match the time available, physical surroundings and individual ability levels.

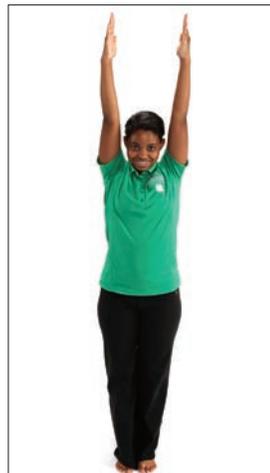
Mountain

1. Stand tall, feet hip-width apart, shoulders relaxed, chest lifted.
2. Flex your toes up to engage your legs.
3. You can either let your arms hang down at your sides or press your palms together at the chest.



Swaying Tree

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart.
2. Raise your arms straight overhead so that your biceps are by your ears, palms facing inward.
3. Keeping your arms parallel, lean from the waist to the right.
4. Come back to center, then lean to the left.



Chair

1. From Mountain Pose, raise your arms overhead so that your biceps are by your ears and your palms facing inward.
2. With your feet no wider than hip-width apart, push your hips and bottom back and bend your knees like you are going to sit in a chair. If your strength allows, lower until your thighs are nearly parallel to the floor.
3. Try to keep your torso upright and your back flat.
4. Make sure your knees stay directly over your ankles.



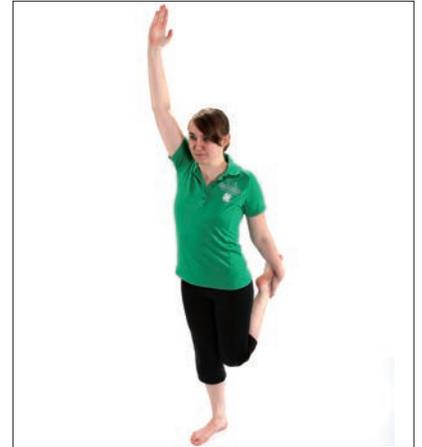
Airplane

1. From Mountain Pose, take a step back with one foot so that your toes are resting lightly on the floor.
2. Hinge forward at the waist and raise your back leg off the floor. Try to make your torso and raised leg parallel to the floor. Keep your head in line with your spine.
3. Keep both legs as straight as possible, without locking your knees.
4. Stretch your arms out to the side and back slightly to form the wings of the airplane.
5. Repeat on the other side.



Half-Dancer

1. Stand tall in Mountain Pose.
2. Bend your knee to bring your right foot toward your bottom. Reach behind you with your right hand and hold the top of your right foot.
3. Raise your left arm so that your bicep is by your ear.
4. Repeat on the other side.



Standing Forward Bend

1. From Mountain Pose, bend forward from the hips; keep your legs as straight as possible without locking your knees.
2. Reach your hands down to the floor, and if you can, place your palms on the floor. Try to bring your forehead to your shins.
3. Slowly straighten back up to standing.



Frog

1. Stand with your feet hip-width apart.
2. Balancing on your feet, squat to the ground. Place your palms on the floor between your feet.
3. Leap as high in the air as you can, like a frog. Repeat the position several times, seeing how high you can jump.



Gorilla

1. From Frog Pose, stand up a little and rest your elbows on your thighs. Your knees should still be bent.
2. Leaving your torso where it is, straighten your legs and raise your tailbone.
3. Swing your arms and torso to the right and shift your weight to your right foot.
4. Then swing to the left and shift your weight to your left foot.
5. Continue shifting your weight and swinging back and forth several times.



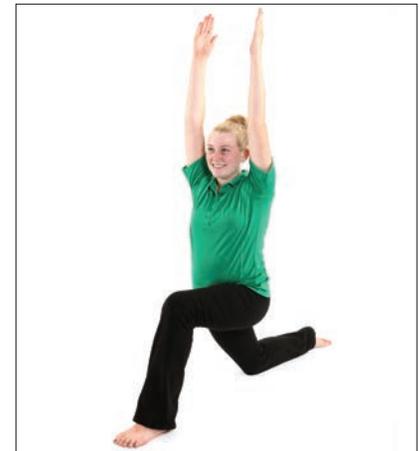
Deep Lunge

1. Standing in Mountain Pose, take a big step forward with one foot into a high lunge position.
2. Bring your hands to your thighs.
3. Bend your front leg until your thigh is parallel to the floor, making sure that the knee does not bend past the ankle.
4. Repeat on the other side.



Dragon

1. From Deep Lunge, lower the knee of your back leg to the floor. Let the top of your foot of that leg rest on the floor.
2. Make sure the knee of your front leg stays directly over your ankle.
3. Raise your arms over your head, palms facing inward.
4. Repeat on the other side.



Twisted Dragon

1. From Dragon Pose, bring your palms together in front of your heart.
2. With your right leg in front, slowly twist your body so that the elbow of your left arm rests on the outside of your right thigh and your right elbow is pointing towards the ceiling.
3. Repeat on the other side.



Tabletop

1. Come onto the floor on your hands and knees.
2. Make sure your hands are directly below your shoulders, your knees are directly below your hips and hip-width apart and your back is flat.



Bird Dog

1. Come onto the floor into Tabletop.
2. Make sure your hands are directly under your shoulders and your knees are directly under your hips.
3. Slowly raise and straighten your right leg behind you until it is parallel to the floor.
4. With your right leg still raised, raise your left arm in front of you.
5. Repeat using the opposite arm and leg.



Pigeon

1. Come onto the floor and get into Tabletop.
2. Bring your right knee to your chest. Angle your leg so that your foot rests on the floor beneath your left hip and your knee rests on the floor on the inside of your right hand.
3. Stretch your left leg back behind you and slowly lower your hips to the ground.
4. Lower your forearms to the floor and look straight ahead.
5. To get out of the pose safely, press your hands into the floor, tuck the toes of your left leg into the floor and lift your left knee off the floor a few inches. Take your right leg back so that your knee is on the floor underneath your hip. Bring the left knee to the floor so it is also underneath your hip.
6. Repeat on the other side.



Dolphin Plank

1. Come onto the floor into Tabletop.
2. Lower your forearms to the floor with your shoulders directly over your elbows. Press your palms together or into the floor.
3. Walk your feet backwards until your body is in a straight line.



Dolphin

1. From Dolphin Plank, press your forearms into the floor, press your hips up and back. At first, keep your knees slightly bent and the heels lifted away from the floor.
2. Then stretch your legs straight and push your heels down toward the floor. Straighten knees, but be sure not to lock them. Keep your head between your upper arms and in line with your spine.



Up Dog

1. Lay down on your stomach, face down with your hands placed under your shoulders.
2. Press your hands into the floor and straighten your arms to lift your torso toward the ceiling. Keep your elbows slightly bent and in close to your sides.
3. Lift your hips and legs 1-2 inches off the floor.



Cow

1. Come onto the floor into Tabletop.
2. Lift your head, chest and tailbone toward the ceiling, allowing your stomach to arch toward the floor.



Cat

1. Come onto the floor into Tabletop.
2. Arch your back up toward the ceiling. Tuck your tailbone under and bring your pelvis forward.
3. Tuck your chin into your chest.



Half-Camel

1. Stand on your knees with your legs and knees hip-width apart.
2. Press the tops of your feet into the floor, push your thighs forward, bring your right hand to your lower back and lift your chest.
3. Keep lifting your chest and bring your right hand to your right heel.
4. Look up toward the ceiling and raise your left hand straight up into the air.
5. Repeat on the other side.



Staff

1. Sit on the floor with your back straight and your feet stretched straight out in front of you.
2. Point your toes toward the ceiling and gently press your palms into the floor to help lengthen your spine.



Easy

1. Sit on the floor in Staff Pose.
2. Cross your shins.
3. Bend and widen your knees, bring your feet closer to your body and rest each foot under the opposite knee.
4. Rest your hands on your knees or press your palms together in front of your chest.



Half-Boat

1. Sit on the floor with your back straight, knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Rest your hands on the floor behind you.
3. Keeping your knees bent and your back straight, shift your weight to your hands and raise your feet and legs off the floor until your calves are parallel to the floor.
4. Reach your arms out in front of you, palms facing inward, so that you are balancing on your tailbone.



River

1. Sit on the floor in Staff Pose.
2. Without rounding your back, bend forward at the hips to reach your hands to your feet and hold your toes.
3. Continue to bend forward at the waist until your elbows are resting on your shins.



Seated Forward Fold

1. Sit on the floor in Staff Pose.
2. Hinge forward at the waist and reach your hands toward your feet.
3. Try to touch your forehead to your legs.



Lying Twist

1. Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.
2. Stretch your arms out to the side to form a “T.” Ideally palms should face upward.
3. Lower your legs to the right, with the left leg stacked on top of the right.
4. Turn your head to the left.
5. Repeat on the other side.



Chill Pose

1. Lie on your back and relax all your muscles.
2. Rest your hands at your sides, palms up.
3. Straighten your legs and let your feet fall open.



References

- Kappmeier K. L., and D. M. Ambrosini. *Instructing Hatha Yoga*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics; 2006
- Budilovsky, J., E. Adamson and C. Flynn. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Yoga*. 4th ed. New York, NY: Penguin Group; 2006
- Kaminoff, L., and A. Matthews. *Yoga Anatomy*. 2nd ed. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics; 2012
- Yoga Journal*. http://www.yogajournal.com/poses/finder/browse_categories

Photos Credit

Kerry Rodtnick, Extension Videographer, Communications, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Little Rock

This document was reviewed and edited by Courtney Butler, 500 E.R.Y.T., R.C.Y.T., R.P.Y.T.

Printed by University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Printing Services.

DR. LISA WASHBURN is assistant professor - health, **LAUREN COPELAND** is program technician - health and **JESSICA VINCENT** is county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. Washburn and Copeland are located in Little Rock. Vincent is located in Hot Springs.

FSFCS70-PD-2-2015N

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.