

**Pink Lotus Yoga**  
**Professional Yoga and Teacher Training**  
**Special Populations Sequences and Ideas: Youth Yoga (ages 4-9)**

**Openings. Sit in circle**

\*Ground **rules**: listen, raise your hand and speak one at a time if you have a question or an idea, cooperate, and have fun!

\*Rolling **the ball** name game: Tell us your name and how old you are. What are some things you really like to do? What is your favorite food? What is your favorite color?

\*What is peace? Let's sit in peace pose.

\*What is relax? Let's play ready set relax!

\***Sound** can make things better, like singing or reading stories or telling stories and talking to our friends and our families. Talk about a choir a group of singers. Choir of 'OM' really quietly. Then a little louder. Then as loudly as possible. Now back to quietly. Now like a whisper.

\***Breathing**. (1) Lion's roar. (2) Breathing slowly through your nose. (3) Breathing back to back.

**Aerobics:**

Cow and Cat Pose (moo and meow)

Saluting the Sun: "Hi!" "Bye!"

Air Walk (pretend you're walking in space or on the moon); Windmills; Yoga (Jumping)  
Jacks

\*Popcorn in a seated position

\*Popcorn on back: **GLUE YOUR HEAD AND YOUR HEELS AND YOUR HANDS TO THE FLOOR!** Keep them down and help the body pop up.

Poses:

Yoga to make your legs and arms strong: Strong Person Pose (Warrior II), Triangle Pose, Downward Facing Dog

Yoga to make your backs strong: Sphinx Pose, Cobra Pose

Yoga to make your tummy strong: Boat Pose/Ready Set Relax

**Games:**

**READY SET RELAX**

**Adventures around the World:** Fly in Superperson Pose from place to place

*Our House: Table, Upward Table, Chairs, Dogs, Cat, Rugs, Gate*

*Our Garden: Tree, Cat, Bug, Flower (lotus mudra), Butterfly*

*A Day at the Zoo: Lion, Elephant, Giraffe, Monkey, Gorilla*

*On Vacation at the Lake: Bridge, Fish, Swimming, Boats, Bird*

*The Desert: Cactus, Snake, Eagle*

*The Mountain: Mountain, Sun, Moon*

**Final Circle:**

\*Sunflower Game (IN on backs, holding hands/EX sit up and the flower closes)

\*Longtime Sun (back to singing)

\*Spaghetti Test: Lie down and relax and make your body soft like spaghetti

\*\*\*\*\*other\*\*\*\*\*

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### **Aerobics:**

Air Walk (pretend you're walking in space or on the moon); Windmills; Yoga (Jumping)  
Jacks

\*Popcorn in a seated position

\*Popcorn on back: heels, hands, and forearms press down and help the body pop up.

Poses:

Child's Pose

Happy Baby Pose

Cat and Cow Pose (moo and meow)

Yoga to make your legs and arms strong: Strong Person Pose (Warrior II), Triangle Pose, Downward Facing Dog

Yoga to make your backs strong: Sphinx Pose, Cobra Pose

Yoga to make your tummy strong: Boat Pose

Keep head on floor!!

\*Spaghetti Test: Lie down and relax and make your body soft like spaghetti

\*Grasping the Sky (Arms up. IN pull sky down to your chest. EX relax)

### **Games:**

\*Log Roll and Tree Game (Children stand in Tree Pose and one at a time child turns into a log and rolls to the river where the other trees wait)

\*Massage Train (teacher is at end); all sit in the same direction and then have everyone turn around halfway through game.

Final Circle:

\*Sunflower Game (IN on backs, holding hands/EX sit up and the flower closes)

\*Longtime Sun (back to singing)

### **Relaxation:**

\*Slow Breathing and relax: Spaghetti Test

\*Ready, Set, Relax!

\*Yoga Imaginations! Make up a pose with your partner, give it a name, show it to us, and then teach everybody the pose. We'll all do the pose you show us.

\*Detective Game: Ask what a detective is. How does a detective solve mysteries? Looking carefully at people and watching. Person leaves the room. One person hides object under mat and when person returns he/she tries to guess who has the object. 3 guesses.

Games:

\*Yoga Pyramid with MOMS

\*The Thankful Hoola Hoop (When the Hoola Hoop comes to you, say one thing you are thankful for)

Final Circle:

\*Sunflower Game (IN on backs, holding hands/EX sit up and the flower closes)

\*Longtime Sun (back to singing)

Sun Salutes (mountain/backbend, FB, table, child)

Easy Pose, Breathing Softly. Breathing Loudly. Lion's Roar

Adventure around the World: Fly in Superperson Pose from place to place

*Our House: Table, Upward Table, Chairs, Dogs, Cat, Rugs, Gate*

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*A Day at the Zoo: Lion, Elephant, Giraffe, Monkey, Gorilla,*

*On Vacation at the Lake: Bridge, Fish, Swimming, Boats, Bird*

*The Desert: Cactus, Snake, Eagle*

*The Mountain: Mountain, Sun, Moon*

### **Group Poses:**

Group tree. Touching palms everyone lifts into tree pose, raising hands into the air.

Group airplane. Everyone comes into a circle and gets into airplane with hands reaching out toward each other.

Group boat. In a circle everyone does boat with feet touching and holding hands.

Group flower. In a circle everyone starts in butterfly pose with feet touching, then slip arms through legs and grab a hold of the hands next to you.

(2 min.) Peace circle

(3 min.) relax

(1 min.) goodbye song (longtime sun fast tempo)

### 6/19 Sequence

(2 min.) Easy Pose; Breathing Softly. Breathing Loudly. Lion's Roar

(2 min.) Yoga Song: I love my yoga, oh yes I do. I love my yoga, oh yes it's true. It makes me happy in all I do. I love my yoga, Oh Yes I do!

Our House!

Upside Down table

Table

Chair

Rocking Chair

Rug

Dogs

Cat

Gate

Tree

Cow

Cobra stretch/Cobra bliss

Fly Like a Butterfly

Twist and Shout

Dance Party

Rest/TUNE IN: Keep your eyes closed. Keep your eyes closed.

Learn some fun twists: Twist our arms, twist our legs, twist standing up, twist sitting

down, twist lying down. Twist with a partner!!! ('Hey' Twists)

Churn the wheel stretch

Learnin postures: Mountain, Tree, Downward Dog, Strong Person, Rowing in unison to the Island and Sea Shell Game

### **Rowing in Unison**

Everyone sits on the floor. When the teacher says 'toes', reach forward (on an inhale), and 'back', lean back (on an exhale), making a long rowing motion in between. Everyone follows in unison. Once you have a nice rhythm going, start to switch up the order to see if everyone is listening. This usually will create a few laughs and maybe an 'oops' or two from those not paying attention.

### **White Board list of poses**

Review a number of yoga poses (5-8) with the children. Divide playing area into two. Designate one area as the Sea another as the Shore. Children run around both areas. When teacher says 'Sea', all the children run to that area. When teacher says 'Shore', they run to that area. When teacher says 'Shells', children stop and perform a yoga pose. Each time 'Shells' is said the children must perform a different yoga pose. The teacher may want to comment on the creativity or performance of the poses to encourage proper alignment or other desirable qualities. Kids especially enjoy taking on the role of 'teacher' and making everyone run from place to place. Oh, the power!

Musical Mats (teacher's assistant—one time each—for those without a mat. TA and teacher assigns a pose for everyone to do)

Peace Circle  
Relaxing Pose  
Goodbye Song

### **Musical Mats**

Set out one yoga mat per participant. I often do this in a circle, oval or large rectangle with all mats facing into the center. Onto each mat place a yoga pose card. Try [ABC Yoga Cards for Kids](#), The Kids Yoga Deck, [Elevator Series Pose Cards](#), or make your own using our [alphabetical list of poses](#). Have a bunch of fun, upbeat music uploaded to your iPod.

### **How to Play**

Before beginning to play, review all poses to make sure everyone knows what they are expected to do and how to practice the poses properly and safely. Have students stand in a circle on the outside of the mats. When music plays students walk, skip, hop, walk backwards, etc. (something different each round is fun) around the mats. When the music stops each student claims a yoga mat and performs the corresponding pose on the mat's yoga card. Encourage students to find a new mat each time.

### **Teacher's Assistant Variation**

Put out enough mats for one per student minus one (i.e. 15 students, 14 mats). Each time the music stops one student will be left without a mat. They are the Teacher's Assistant and get to help everyone else perform their pose, giving suggestions and

encouragement. Sometimes children will delay choosing a mat in order to be the Teacher's Assistant. Make it understood that everyone will only get one opportunity to be the assistant. If someone really doesn't want to be the assistant make a pose into a partner pose and go onto the next round.

#### Partner Poses Variation

Choose a partner. As the music plays walk together around the mats, holding hands or arms linked if desired. When music stops claim a mat and perform the partner pose which corresponds to that mat. This is great fun for a Family Yoga class or anytime you want to build connections and develop cooperation and social skills.

#### Circle

Song: I've been Getting Up for Yoga (sung to the tune of "I've Been Working on the Railroad")

I've been getting up for yoga  
Every single day  
I've been getting up for yoga  
Just to wash the sleepies away.  
Can't you hear the birdies calling  
Rise up so early in the morn  
Can't you see the sun is shining?  
A brand new day is born.  
When you're feeling low  
Moving kind of slow  
Then you do your yoga and go go go  
When you're feeling low  
Moving kind of slow  
Then you do your yoga and go go go  
When you get up for yoga  
Then you feel good all day.  
When you get up for yoga  
You're happy in your work and play.

#### Intros and Bean Bag Game (seated)

Sunrise/Sunset in a circle on knees/child; standing backbend/forward bend; East/west

The Elephant Walk and Music: The Elephant Song

The Dinosaur Walk and Music: The Dinosaur Song

Downward Dog: Shake legs, bark, and growl Music: Who Let the Dogs Out?

Family Down Dog: Crawl under; switch

Down Dog Tunnels: Everyone lines up side to side in downdog and everyone takes turns slinking through the tunnel and getting back into downdog.

Family Scarf: Breathe to keep scarf in the air.

Learn Yoga: The Little Fish Story Music: One Love

A little fish is in his little pond at home, floating on his back: Fish Pose

The little fish leaves his pond, swimming, swimming, swimming (SP's swimming)

The little fish comes to a river.  
The little fish swims under a bridge: Bridge Pose  
The little fish swims past a tall mountain: Mountain Pose  
The little fish swims past all kinds of trees: Tree Pose  
The little fish swims past the Proud Warrior: Warrior Pose  
The little fish swims past the Strong Goddess: Goddess Pose  
The little fish swims past the Archer: Archer Pose  
The little fish returns to his pond and swims and swims and swims (SP's swimming)  
The little fish relaxes.

Rowing to the Island: Your mat is a boat! Row to the island. Music

Animals on the Island: Tropical Island: walking like elephants, picking bananas like monkeys, stalking prey like tigers, slinking around like lizards, hissing like cobras and drinking water like giraffes.

Standing in Circle: Group Boat, Group Tree, Group Airplane  
Peace Circle: Start in Child Pose. Bumblebee breathing. OMs  
Imagination Yoga: Children make up some poses and teach them to the

Partner boat. Holding hands facing each other with leg bent, extend legs up together while balancing on sit bones.

Group tree. Touching palms everyone lifts into tree pose, raising hands into the air.

Group airplane. Everyone comes into a circle and gets into airplane with hands reaching out toward each other.

Group boat. In a circle everyone does boat with feet touching and holding hands.

Group flower. In a circle everyone starts in butterfly pose with feet touching, then slip arms through legs and grab a hold of the hands next to you.

Back breathing in teams of two

Lizard on a Rock

Family Downward Dog: Shake legs, bark, and crawl

Yoga Song: I love my yoga, oh yes I do. I love my yoga, oh yes it's true. It makes me happy in all I do. I love my yoga, Oh Yes I do!

Learn Mountain, Tree, Strong Person, Downward Dog, Child, then Rowing to the Island and Sea Shell Game

Sitting in a circle: Yogi says (have scarves ready; include blowing on scarves); group boat pose

Peace Circle

(5 min.) Relaxation and the magic scarf: mothers put to sleep and wake up children (chimes to transition)

Cat/Cow (Moo/Meow)

Down Dog/Cobra (Woof/Hiss)

Tropical Island: breathing like elephants, picking bananas like monkeys, stalking prey like tigers, slinking around like lizards, hissing like cobras and drinking water like giraffes

## Make Up a Pose and Teach Everyone Freeze Tag and Dance

Resources: Some of the resources that I used to help gather ideas for this class were a DVD called [Yoga for Families](#) led by Ingrid Von Burg and a great book called [Playful Family Yoga](#) by Teressa Asencia.

### Breathing Exercises

- ☐ We played a breathing game with each family trying to keep a scarf up in the air with their breath.
- ☐ We started using slinkies to help us visualize our lungs expanding and contracting with breath.
- ☐ Then each family partnered up to do some back breathing using the slow breath that we practiced first.
- ☐ We began to link body and breath with sunrise/sunset pose – starting in child’s pose, inhale and rise on your knees extending your hands above your head like the sun rising and then reverse the direction ending back in child’s pose.
- ☐ Finally, we did some cat/cows linking breath to each pose.

### Sun Salutations

- ☐ Kids helped show their parents how we reach to the sun and then say “hi” to our toes.
- ☐ We hissed in cobra and barked in down dog. The poses may not be difficult but it is sometimes hard for us adults to let go and act like a kid and see the fun in something that we usually take seriously.

*Week II or after: We focused more on Downward Facing Dog while listening to “Who Let the Dogs Out”.*

- ☐ *We lifted a leg to shake our tail. We brought our knee toward our opposite wrist and then lengthened our leg back behind us and then brought our knee toward the same wrist then lengthened it out again.*
- ☐ *We rested in child’s pose.*
- ☐ *Then we got wild and flipped our dogs saying hi to our families.*

I then led everyone on a sequence with some tropical island flair.

- ☐ We listened to steel drums while breathing like elephants, picking bananas like monkeys, stalking prey like tigers, slinking around like lizards, hissing like cobras and drinking water like giraffes.

We spent the rest of the time doing family partner poses.

- ☐ *Sitting in rock. One person rests in child’s pose (usually the larger adult) while another family member aligns the pant line of their pants with that of the person on the floor and gently sits. The person on the bottom gets a deeper spine stretch. Be careful if you have knee issues.*
- ☐ Lizard sunbathing on a rock. Starting in the same position with one person in child’s pose, the second person furthers their stretch by lying down

head to head and extending their arms side to side.

- □ Down dog tunnels. Everyone lines up side to side in down dog and everyone takes turns slinking through the tunnel and getting back into down dog.
- □ *Double down dogs. One person gets into down dog. The second person stands at the feet of their partner and faces away. Then the second person slowly lifts their feet onto the sacrum (pant line) of the first and gets into their own down dog.*
- □ Group tree. Touching palms everyone lifts into tree pose, raising hands into the air.
- □ Group airplane. Everyone comes into a circle and gets into airplane with hands reaching out toward each other.
- □ Group boat. In a circle everyone does boat with feet touching and holding hands.
- □ Group flower. In a circle everyone starts in butterfly pose with feet touching, then slip arms through legs and grab a hold of the hands next to you.
- □ Partner boat. Holding hands facing each other with leg bent, extend legs up together while balancing on sit bones.
- □ We ended the group poses with each family creating a unique pose of their choice.

And finished with savasana.

## Body Awareness

Use the scarves during warm up. Waking up the body placing the scarf over the toes, knees, etc. Younger children and those with special needs in particular love the idea of “waking up” the body parts.

## Asana

Use the scarves as a prop to hold with several asanas/poses, it is a challenge for older students. Poses such as [Warrior](#) (arms up holding the scarf open looking up, focusing on the scarf), [Dancer](#) and for balancing poses such as Crow it can be used as a focal point.

## Games

Common games such as [freeze dance](#) become fun and different with a scarf in hand. It also gives a difference sense of spatial awareness for the child. Playing games such as “[Yogi Says](#)” is also fun, ex. “Yogi Says, place your scarf on your head.”

## Scarf Breathing

Laying down placing the scarf on the belly creating awareness for deep belly breaths. Placing them over the face and blowing them upward attempting for lift off.

I find scarves to be such a handy prop. It is easy to be creative with them they can become water, clouds etc. in a story or movement experience. Most importantly they are light in weight if you have to carry them around. Having a set in two different types of material is also very interesting to see the children explore the texture and how it moves differently.



When teaching yoga to children you always need a number of yoga games at your disposal. Freeze Dance/Statues is a quick and easy one to use at the beginning or end of class. It helps kids to break free of constraints and let their inhibitions go. Integrating music into the yoga classroom is most natural. Choose music to correspond to the class theme or just something fun and upbeat. This activity will really get the heart rate up and increase the positive energy in the room. Kids LOVE playing Freeze Dance/Statues so be sure to pull this one out of your instructor's bag o' tricks often.

### Freeze Dance/Statues

Begin by reviewing a few suggested yoga poses. [Mountain](#), [Warrior](#), [Eagle](#), [Tree](#), [Dancer](#), and other standing and balance poses work especially well with this activity as they are easy poses to assume when dancing around a room. Next turn on some music. Fun, up-tempo tunes work best. While the music plays everyone freestyle dances around the room. When the music stops everyone must freeze in a yoga pose...become a statue.

The teacher can then go around and provide adjustments or give suggestions on how to better perform the pose. Be sure to only do one or two students at a time as its hard to hold some poses for a long time, especially for kids who really want to be dancing. I generally praise creative poses or ones that are a little more difficult. Also one rule we follow is that you can't do the same pose twice in a row – that's the reason for reviewing a variety of poses at the beginning.

### Sea Shells

Review a number of yoga poses (5-8) with the children. Divide playing area into two. Designate one area as the Sea another as the Shore. Children run around both areas. When teacher says 'Sea', all the children run to that area. When teacher says 'Shore', they run to that area. When teacher says 'Shells', children stop and perform a yoga pose. Each time 'Shells' is said the children must perform a different yoga pose. The teacher may want to comment on the creativity or performance of the poses to encourage proper alignment or other desirable qualities.

Kids especially enjoy taking on the role of 'teacher' and making everyone run from place to place. Oh, the power!

### Rowing in Unison

Everyone sits on the floor. When the teacher says '**toes**', reach forward (on an inhale), and '**back**', lean back (on an exhale), making a long rowing motion in between. Everyone follows in unison. Once you have a nice rhythm going, start to switch up the order to see if everyone is listening. This usually will create a few laughs and maybe an 'oops' or two from those not paying attention.

Choose a new caller from the group and repeat if you want to provide opportunities for leadership building. For more information on how this is accomplished visit [Yoga Supports & Reinforces Character Education](#).

This is a very useful game for "Day at the Beach," "Amazon Adventures," or "Trip Down the Nile" yoga adventure stories.

### Opposites

Have students come into a familiar pose. Then ask them to practice the 'opposite' pose. Don't tell them what the opposite pose is but instead invite them to make a pose that

seems to have an opposite quality. You may find that students may flip a pose upside down, turn an active pose into a passive pose, or perform an actual yoga counter pose.

Be prepared for [interesting personal interpretation](#). Performing 4-6 poses in a row in this manner is a great exercise and really gets the creative juices flowing.

### **Add One**

Stand in a circle. The first person performs a pose of their choice. Everyone practices this pose and the second person adds another one. Everyone performs these two poses in order, then the third person adds a new, different pose to the chain. Continue on (working as a group to remember the order when necessary) until all students have had a chance to add a pose.

This is deceptively simple and definitely works the memory if you have a large class. With a small class, you may want to go around the circle twice. The teacher may have to prompt students who are having difficulty coming up with a new pose to add to the chain.

I often play this game when teaching the theme 'The Pet Store' where students choose animals that you would find at the pet store and we practice the associated pose. Be sure to download your FREE copy of this yoga adventure story and sign up for our fantastic newsletter.

Playing Add One definitely keeps the kids engaged and they are always eager to think of an animal or pose we haven't yet suggested. Try it the next time you are teaching a class and let me know how it worked.

### **General Sequence of a Children's and Family Yoga Classes**

- Ψ Introductory Verse and Greetings
- Ψ Tune in chant
- Ψ Development of Foundation Skills – attention, listening with whole self
- Ψ Learning about and experiencing yoga breathing – using balloons, feathers, etc.
- Ψ Name games with balloons, balls, bean bags, and other props
- Ψ Warm-up using story
- Ψ Yoga postures – using verses, songs, stories, and games
- Ψ Deep relaxation with songs
- Ψ Guided Meditation
- Ψ Wake-up Exercises – family circle, group circle
- Ψ Goodbye Song

### **Weekly Variations:**

- Ψ Week 1 – Introductions, ground rules/expectations, Peace Circle,
- Ψ Week 2 – Review basics of yoga, benefits of each pose
- Ψ Week 3 – Introduce family/partner/group yoga activates, further teachings on meditation
- Ψ Weeks 4 - 11– Add a few new individual and partner poses, hold postures longer, take turns leading
- Ψ Weeks 5 - 12- Begin to introduce other health concepts – healthy food, positive thinking, affirmation, poses for balance and strength, sending healing energy to others

### **Benefits of Children's and Family Yoga**

- Ψ To connect as a family/group
- Ψ To engage in a healthy life-sustaining activity together
- Ψ To be playful together
- Ψ To promote self-discipline
- Ψ To exercise the body and help physical coordination
- Ψ To help right/left brain coordination
- Ψ To increase physical and emotional self-awareness
- Ψ To increase self-confidence
- Ψ To encourage awareness of the spirit
- Ψ To increase a sense of calm and focus
- Ψ To develop healthy techniques for managing stress, anger and frustration
- Ψ To build self-esteem

For an adult yoga class most instructors use a mat, an mp3 player, and if you are lucky an eye pillow. Iyengar classes will add a strap, a block, a blanket, and possibly a chair. For any given kids yoga class, take that basic list and add books, puppets, feathers, scarves, pompoms, parachutes, stuffed animals, musical instruments, hula hoops, card decks, hoberman spheres, rocks, balls, bean bags, craft supplies, colouring sheets, and more. Be sure to have some storage space available.