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# Body Poetry: Yoga Cards

Exercise, imagine, stretch and create!



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Connect with your emotions and set your spirit free! The word 'yoga' is Sanskrit and means 'unity' or 'oneness.' Yoga is an exercise for the mind, body and spirit. Its main benefits are, when properly practised, to create a balance between the nervous system and endocrine system which produces and secretes hormones into the blood stream and intestinal fluids and organs of the body. Yoga's goals are to attain mental peace, improved concentration, achieve deep relaxation and support harmonious relationship with others. Yoga has been refined over centuries in India and is now practised all over the world by people of all ages working to develop mental discipline while engaging in healthy exercise!

Our primary goal with Body Poetry: Yoga Cards is to give children an exercise that they can do in the classroom for twenty minutes a day which promotes a healthy lifestyle. Our secondary goal is to relate yoga to other areas of the curriculum including dramatic play and language arts. Start by teaching the entire class all of the poses, starting with the easy ones color-coded in green and proceeding to the more complex poses in yellow and ending with the challenging poses in red. Start out by describing each pose to children while showing them the photograph. Once children are comfortable posing in the various positions, you can simply hold up the card and the children will strike the pose without a verbal description. At this stage be sure to walk through the class and provide further instructions to students who may be struggling. Finally, challenge your students with different routines by arranging the cards in new sequences.

Use our Body Poetry: Yoga Cards as a learning tool for integrating physical activity into the busy day. We've strategically designed sixteen yoga poses and organized them in three challenge levels.

- Green Cards: Easy
- Yellow Cards: Intermediate
- Red Cards: Challenging

On the reverse side of each card are illustrated instructions on how to perform the poses and movements. Note: We've highlighted the part of the body that moves or stretches in the color of the card. For instance, the easy cards show a mannikin with the highlighted part of the body in green. Children can use the cards to recreate the poses working alone, in pairs or in groups by referring to the illustrated instructions on the back of each card. Teachers can read the instructions from this guide for verbal instructions that they can relate to their students. Tip: While becoming familiar with the cards, photocopy and cut out the instructions from this guide and paper clip them to the back of the cards for quick reference.

Note: We've made up fun names for traditional poses to make yoga as accessible as possible to young children. The illustrations framing the photographic poses are intended to help the child relate to the pose and can be used in dramatic play and language arts activities.

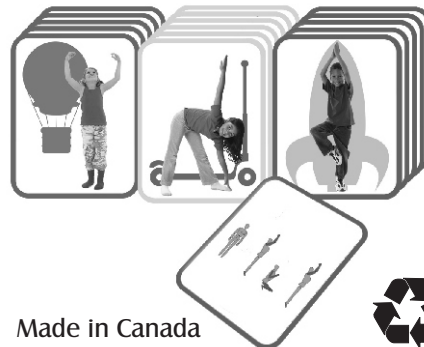
## Yoga Tips:

1. Breathing is essential to yoga! Always start yoga with a few breathing exercises:

- As a warm up breathing exercise, ask students to stand while placing one hand on their chest and one hand on their abdomen (stomach). Ask them to inhale deeply through the nose while feeling the chest and abdomen rise. Exhale through the mouth but keep the mouth, cheeks and tongue relaxed while breathing out. Ask children to relax while breathing and not raise their shoulders while breathing in.
- As an intermediate exercise, ask children to stand while placing one hand on their abdomen and one hand on their chest. This time, ask them to start by filling their belly with air first, then filling the bottom of their chest and finally filling the top of their chest. It will require a deep breath and concentration, but they will develop self discipline through breathing!
- For a challenging breathing exercise, ask children to take three short breathes through the nose before exhaling through the mouth while moving their arms. Start by standing with the arms to the sides. On the first inhale, lift arms out in front. On the first inhale, lift arms straight to shoulder level in front. On the second inhale, move arms out to either side. On the third inhale, lift arms straight out above head. On the exhale, slowly breathe out through the mouth while arcing the arms down to rest at either side of the body.

2. Begin and end your session with a few warm up/cool down stretches. Young children may not need to warm up before exercise, but it is a wonderful habit to develop. Note: Stretching is a great way to build discipline in your routines, especially if the poses change from day to day. Once a warm up routine is firmly established, ask different students to lead the stretches. Try these simple stretches:

- Ask students to stand beside their desks with their back straight and their feet planted at shoulder width apart. Spread arms out and hold them perpendicular to the floor and count to twelve. Relax arms and tilt head back for a count of twelve. Bend head forward and hold in place for a count of twelve. Return head to an upright position and stand on tippy toes for a count of twelve. Repeat as desired.
- For intermediate stretching, perform the previous stretches and add some new ones. Clasp hands over head. Bend the back and shoulders, but not waist to the right. Count to twelve. Return to an upright position and then bend to the left and count to twelve.
- Hold right arm at shoulder level pointing to the left. Place the left hand above the right elbow and slowly pull the arm



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forward. This stretches the upper arm and shoulder. Hold for a count of twelve and repeat with the left arm.

- For more challenging stretches, perform the previous stretches and add a leg stretch. Hold the edge of the desk and squat down while the heels lift off the floor. Use the desk to help balance while stretching.

3. Once children are warmed up, ask them to assume one of the Body Poetry poses and hold it for thirty seconds. Your goal should be to hold the pose for a full two minutes, but begin with thirty seconds and gradually increase over the course of several weeks.

4. Practice Body Poetry poses on an empty stomach or wait half an hour before engaging in these movements. You will feel much better!

5. Observe our illustrated guide or use our written instructions to understand how each posture and movement is performed. Perform the poses and movements on both sides of the body.

Activities:

1. Student Yogi Master: Once students are familiar with some or all of the poses, ask a student to lead the exercise. Encourage the student to sort through the cards and pick poses that make up a routine. When it is exercise time, ask the student to lead the class through the poses. Select a different student each week to create and lead their own routines.

2. Appeal to the Ear: Add music and sound to your exercise routines. Choose classical or contemporary songs. Ensure the music matches the mood of your routines. Find recordings of natural sounds like the ocean or forest and play them while posing. Record the sound of wind chimes and play it back during the routines. Music and natural sounds is especially good to incorporate in classrooms with boisterous students!

3. Invent Your Own Poses: Once you have mastered all of our poses, make up some of your own. Pick a theme such as weather, underwater life, outer space travel or prehistoric times. Students can work in groups to create and illustrate poses based on the themes. Once complete, ask each group to lead the class in performing their routines.

Green Cards/Beginner Level

Hot-Air Balloon

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, arms down and relaxed.
2. Bend your knees and upper body, allowing your fingertips to touch the floor.
3. Inhale as you come back up, raising your arms high above your head, leaning slightly backward.
4. Exhale as you lower you arms and bring your hands together in front of your chest.
5. Take five deep breaths and repeat this movement.



**Duration:** Repeat movement at least 3 times before the next pose.  
**Guideline:** Anyone with back problems should gently arch back.  
**Benefits:** The body will fill with energy and oxygen. Stimulates the circulation.

Morning Blossom

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you stretch your arms out to the sides, as wide as you can.
3. Lean back, moving your hips forward with you head looking up at the ceiling.
4. Exhale as you go back to starting position and repeat!

**Duration:** Hold position for 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

**Guideline:** Relax and loosen neck muscles. Proceed gently if you have back problems.

**Benefits:** Opens the chest; stretches both the spine and front of body.



Water Fountain

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, placing palms of your hands on your lower back with fingers pointing down.
2. Exhale as you bring your pelvis forward, tilt your back and bring your chest up, arms bent and head looking up at the ceiling.
3. Inhale as you return to the starting position.

**Duration:** Hold position for 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

**Guideline:** Hold your head up and look at the ceiling. Do not tilt your head fully back. Proceed gently if you have lower back pains. There is no need to bend your back too far.

**Benefits:** Strengthens the lower back, tones the kidneys, adrenal glands and abdominal muscles.



Ironing Board

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, arms down and relaxed, knees a little bent.
2. Inhale as you bring your arms out to the sides and up above your head.
3. Exhale as you slowly lean your upper body forward, letting your neck and arms go down and dangle in front of you. Knees should be bent allowing your fingertips to touch your feet.
4. Allow your upper body to hang for a moment.

5. Slowly raise your upper body by placing your hands on your thighs to assist this action.

**Duration:** Hang down for 1 minute.

**Guideline:** For those with high blood pressure, only hang down for maximum of 30 seconds. To make this pose less strenuous on your back, bend your knees more!

**Benefits:** Strengthens spine and helps to relieve tension in lower back.



Once you are comfortable with the poses, try some of our routines. Encourage children to choreograph their own unique exercises.

“At the Park” Theme:  
 Water Fountain (green)  
 Wooden Bridge (green)  
 The Slide (yellow)  
 Trapeze Rings (red)

“Nature” Theme:  
 Morning Blossom (green)  
 Tree in the Wind (yellow)  
 Swaying Sunflower (yellow)  
 Sprout (red)

“Around the Home” Theme:  
 Ironing Board (red)  
 Grandfather Clock (yellow)  
 Step Ladder (yellow)  
 Sprinkler (red)

“Transportation” Theme:  
 Hot-Air Balloon (green)  
 Scooter (yellow)  
 Rocket (red)  
 Airplane (red)

### Wooden Bridge

1. Begin by spreading your feet and arms wide part.
2. Turn your right foot about 90 degrees, (toes pointing outwards) and stand on the ball of your left foot.
3. Inhale as you slightly bend your right knee until you can feel the stretch. Turn your head towards your right arm.
4. Make sure to keep your hips and shoulders parallel.
5. Exhale as you straighten your leg and repeat movement on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold this pose for 1 minute. Repeat on other side.

**Guideline:** Those suffering from heart conditions should not perform this pose.

**Benefits:** Strengthens and tones leg muscles and abdominal organs.



### Slide

1. Stand with feet together, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you go up onto your toes.
3. Exhale as you go down into a squat, placing your fingertips on the floor.
4. Extend your left leg out and hold this position.
5. Repeat on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Continue to repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** Approach this position gently if you have knee or hip problems.

**Benefits:** Helps relieve stiffness in the hip, knee and ankle joints.



### Yellow Cards/Intermediate Level

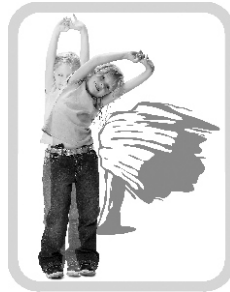
#### Tree in the Wind

1. Stand with feet hip-width apart, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you lock fingers together and lift arms above your head. Proceed by turning hands inside out and pushing them up high to the ceiling.
3. Exhale. Using your hips, bend to the right side allowing your left arm to touch your left ear.
4. Inhale as you reposition back to the center pose, pushing your hands towards the ceiling.
5. Repeat this movement on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold position for 30 seconds. Repeat twice on both sides.

**Guidelines:** If you find that swaying becomes a problem during this move, tuck in your tailbone. This will also protect your lower back.

**Benefits:** Stretches and tones the sides of the upper body.



#### Grandfather Clock

1. Stand with feet together, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you extend your right arm over your head.
3. Bend your left arm behind your back. Exhale as you bend your right arm behind your back and aim for both hands to touch each other. Try to interlock your fingers and hold this position for a moment.
4. Repeat on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Continue to repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** If your hands are unable to reach each other, use a ruler and work your way up.

**Benefits:** This pose will promote better posture. It opens up the chest, loosening the arms, underarms and chest.



#### Scooter

1. Begin this movement by having your feet and arms spread wide apart with your palms down. Turn your right foot about 90 degrees and your left foot slightly inwards.
2. Inhale and then exhale as you go down, bending your upper body to the right and take hold of your right ankle. Extend your left arm pointing your fingertips up to the ceiling.
3. Inhale and exhale as you return to a standing position, relax and repeat movement on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Increase holding for up to two minutes. Repeat on opposite side.

**Guidelines:** For those with hip and lower back problems, do this pose gently.

**Benefits:** Strengthens and tones the entire body. Improves flexibility of hip joints.



#### Swaying Sunflower

1. Stand with feet hip width apart.
2. Inhale as you raise your left arm out to the side and up over your head. Follow this movement with your eyes allowing your forearm to bend while its over top of your head. Your right arm should be out to the side.
3. As you exhale, repeat this movement with your right arm by raising it above your head. Follow this movement with your eyes and ensure that your left arm is out to the side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 1 minute.

**Guidelines:** Keep neck and back as straight as possible with your chin down.

**Benefits:** Strengthens the underarm area, loosens the shoulders.



### Step Ladder

1. Stand with feet hip width apart, arms down and relaxed while your pelvis is bent inwards.
2. Inhale as you stretch your left arm up.
3. Exhale as you slowly slide your right hand straight down towards your knee.
4. Inhale as you straighten your body and exhale as you lower your right arm down.
5. Repeat this movement on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 60 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 3 minutes.

**Guidelines:** To make this pose less strenuous on your back, bend your knees a little bit more.

**Benefits:** Helps promote flexibility. Strengthens waist, hip and abdominal areas.



### Sprinkler

1. Stand with feet hip width apart, arms down and relaxed. If you focus on a spot in front of you, this will help improve your balance for the following steps.
2. Slowly bend your right leg behind you, using your left leg as your support beam. Using your right hand, grab hold of your right ankle. As you inhale swing your left arm up in front of you.
3. Slightly lean your body forward, while raising your right knee as far as you can go without feeling discomfort.
4. Hold this position for a moment, exhale and then repeat on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** Perform the 'Trapeze Rings' pose before attempting this one.

**Benefits:** Helps improve concentration, physical stability and self-confidence.



### Red Cards

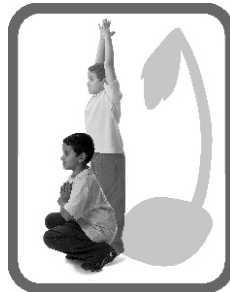
#### Sprout

1. Stand with feet hip width apart, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you raise your arms out to the side and up above your head. Palms should be together as you elevate yourself onto your toes.
3. Exhale as you bend your knees and go into a squatting position, standing on the balls of your feet. Your hands should be at chest level, with your palms still together. Hold for a moment then begin to rise!
4. Inhale as you rise up onto your toes stretching your arms above your head.
5. Finally exhale as you lower your arms and hands, bringing your heels to the floor.

**Duration:** Begin by holding for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** Helps improve coordination, balance and physical stability.

**Benefits:** Avoid this pose if you have knee problems.



#### Rocket

1. Imagine your left leg being rooted into the ground. Focus on a spot on the wall and begin to elevate your right leg. Bend your right leg and place the sole of your foot on your left inner thigh.
2. Place the palm of your hands together at chest level and then raise them above your head, keeping palms together. Hold this position for a moment and then repeat on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** You may use your hands to put your foot into place. To make this pose slightly easier, place your right foot on your left foot. To make this movement slightly more difficult, place your right foot on your upper left thigh.

**Benefits:** Helps improve concentration, stability, posture, and confidence.



#### Trapeze Rings

1. Stand with feet hip width apart, arms down and relaxed. Focus on a spot in front of you! This will help improve your balance for the following steps.
2. Slowly bend your right leg behind you, using your left leg as your support beam. Using your hand, grab hold of your right ankle and bring it close to your buttocks. Try to keep your knees together.
3. As you inhale swing your left arm up above your head.
4. Hold this position for a moment and then repeat on the other side.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 2 minutes.

**Guidelines:** Tuck in tailbone, keeping back and neck straight.

**Benefits:** Helps develop confidence and concentration. Strengthens leg muscles.



#### Airplane

1. Stand with feet hip width apart, arms down and relaxed.
2. Inhale as you elevate yourself onto your toes; arms lifted up on each side keeping them at shoulder level.
3. Exhale as you squat down, still remaining on the balls of your feet, keeping your back straight and your knees relaxed.
4. Inhale as you rise to go back into the starting position.

**Duration:** Hold once for 30 seconds. Repeat until you can hold for 1 minute.

**Guidelines:** Proceed gently if you have knee and ankle problems.

**Benefits:** Helps develop concentration. Strengthens hips, thighs and knees.

