



WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN THIS GUIDE:

- Benefits of doing yoga
- Facilitation guidelines
- Safety rules for doing yoga in a classroom
- Yoga supportive materials
- Peanut yoga ball activity cards
- Breathing exercises

Yoga is a great way for toddlers and preschool children to build flexibility, balance, strength, and endurance. It involves a variety of stretches and breathing techniques and can be used for gentle physical activity. Yoga can be done as its own exercise routine, or as part of warming up and cooling down before and after more intensive physical activity. Yoga is also great as part of naptime routines. There are many yoga exercises to choose from and/or adapt to participant needs. You can introduce yoga to children as an accessible, inclusive form of physical activity that will help them grow and be healthier.



Freepik (2024)

Benefits of Doing Yoga

According to research, yoga can help young children grow and develop physically, emotionally, and cognitively. Yoga helps build better:

- Strength and flexibility, particularly during periods of rapid growth
- Motor skills, balance, and coordination
- Body awareness
- Sleep patterns
- Brain development related to memory and critical thinking
- Emotional regulation and mindfulness
- Focus and concentration
- Self-esteem and confidence
- Discipline and patience



Facilitation Guidelines

Simple guidelines for planning and doing yoga with toddlers and preschoolers can help keep activities safe, inclusive, fun, and engaging.

1. Know the needs of the children you are guiding

- Diverse abilities and needs may be physical, cognitive, social, sensory, etc. Think about how you can adjust activities to meet those needs.
- Ask about any injuries children may have at the time of activities.

2. Start with a warm and welcoming routine

- Begin with a circle, greeting, or breathing activity.
- Establish predictable routines to help children feel secure.

3. Keep it fun and simple

- Turn poses into stories, games, or imaginative adventures.
- Use animal themes, nature themes, or pretend-play to keep children engaged.

4. Use clear, simple instructions

- Give short, direct cues (“Stand tall like a tree!,” “Stretch like a cat!”).
- Demonstrate movements or display images rather than relying on verbal instructions alone.

5. Prioritize safety and comfort

- Check for space around each child (no clutter, slippery floors, or sharp edges).
- Encourage children to move slowly and listen to their own bodies.

6. Keep sessions short and structured

- Young children learn best in quick, varied segments.
- Mix breathing, movement, games, and rest time.

8. Encourage creativity and self-expression

- Let children invent new poses or name their own movements.
- Celebrate their ideas with positive language rather than correcting them.

9. Avoid competition

- Emphasize cooperation and participation, not comparison.
- Focus on effort, joy, and body awareness — not performance.

10. Use props or visuals

- Mats, beanbags, scarves, or picture cards help children stay engaged.
- Props provide tactile cues that support learning.

11. End with a Gentle Cool-Down

- Add a short rest pose, breathing, or gratitude moment.
- Let children share how their body feels afterward.





Doing Yoga with Young Children

Safety Rules for Yoga in a Classroom

It is important for everyone to follow certain rules while doing yoga. This lets us all know how to behave and what to expect so that everyone can be safe and have fun. Here are some rules we can follow while doing yoga:

<p>Stay in your spot</p> 	<p>Keep your hands and feet to yourself</p> 
<p>Watch what the teacher does</p> 	<p>Listen to instructions</p> 
<p>Try your best</p> 	<p>Ask for help</p> 
<p>Use your quiet voice</p> 	<p>If you need a break, sit quietly in your spot</p> 



Yoga Supportive Material

Yoga can be done with nothing more than your own body — or you can use props and visuals to support children in doing activities. Materials such as mats, beanbags, scarves, or picture cards help children stay engaged and guide them in understanding what to do. Props can also contribute to greater tactile learning and encourage development of balance, body awareness, and control.

Here are some of the materials you can use in teaching yoga to young children:

- **Vinyl spot markers/mats**

Easily washable or wipeable, spot markers and mats help children understand where to stand and where to center their yoga activities. This will make it easier for them to follow safety guidelines and respect each other's space.



- **Peanut yoga balls**

These yoga balls are more stable than traditional round yoga balls, making them better for young children and children with physical disabilities or developmental delays. Using them for exercise can help build core muscular strength. Inflate them with the pump provided and pair them with yoga exercises designed for their use. When finished, wipe them down and deflate them for easy storage. Find peanut yoga ball activity cards on page 7-12 of this guide.



- **Timers**

A timer, particularly a sand timer, provides children with a clear visual prop that helps them gauge how long they should hold or have held a position for. Alternatively, a timer can be used to help children know when it is time to transition to a new pose or activity.



- **Pose visual aids**

Rather than relying on verbal or written instructions, provide young learners with visual prompts. Visuals are important for most children as a model for poses they are working to achieve. You can find a variety of visual aids for yoga poses for young children sitting, standing, laying down, and/or with the different types of yoga balls.





Yoga Supportive Material (continued...)

- **Twist-and-pose games**

Fun for individuals or small groups, twist-and-pose games allow children to experiment with moving and stretching their bodies. Smaller or junior versions of twist-and-pose games are better for children under 5 to ensure they can reach and balance.



- **Bean Bags**

Promote balance and posture by placing light bean bags on young children's arms, legs, heads, or chests while they are holding yoga poses. Children can also hold bean bags against their chests or stomachs to help them concentrate on deep breathing.



- **Hoberman Sphere**

This tactile, collapsible tool can be used to guide deep, rhythmic breathing. Extend the sphere while inhaling deeply, and contract it while exhaling as much as you can. This can help children visualize how they should expand their chests and bellies while doing calming, deep breathing. In addition, children can do gentle stretching by expanding and contracting the sphere. Guide children on where to place their hands so that they can gently pull the Hoberman sphere and extend it while spreading their arms out wide.



Peanut Yoga Ball Activity Cards

Activity cards can provide simple guides on how to use yoga balls. Yoga balls are great tools to engage both children and adults in physical activity, and peanut yoga balls — yoga balls with a distinctive “peanut” shape — are particularly good for use with young children. They are more stable than traditional yoga balls while still allowing for the same fun activities!

Find Peanut Yoga Ball Activity Cards on the following pages. Remember that each pose can be adapted for children's individual needs. Also, even if you do not have peanut yoga balls on hand, you can still do the same poses and exercises with traditional yoga balls or even with small chairs. Print copies of these cards and laminate them for extended use.

This page is left intentionally blank.



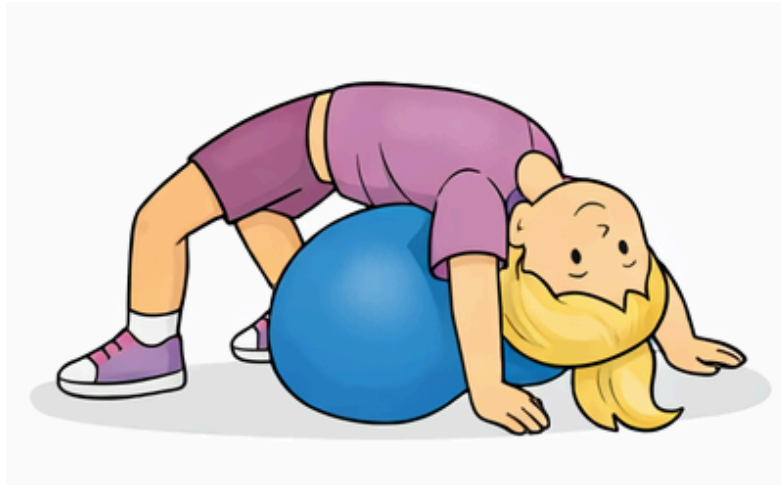
Forward Roll

Rest your forebody against the ball crosswise. Stretch and roll gently forwards and backward by alternately pushing with arms and legs. Stretch as far forward or backwards as you feel safe and comfortable with. Try holding out one arm and then the other, and/or one foot and then the other, while rolling.



Straddle

Side right in the middle of the ball with your legs to either side. Try bouncing gently, stretching your arms out and up, and twisting at the waist. You can also try scooting further forward or backwards on the ball and practice balancing.



Back Bend

Rest your back against the dip in the middle of the ball. Rock gently back and forth by bending and extending your legs. Roll 10 times.



Plank

Rest arms and upper body against the lengthwise ball. Stretch your feet out straight behind you. Hold the pose for 10–15 seconds. Repeat five times. You can roll or bounce the ball gently, but keep your body straight.



Side Sit

While sitting sideways on the ball, stretch first one arm and then the other above your head and to the side, holding for 10-15 seconds. Then stretch both arms up, to the left, and to the right.

Repeat each motion 5 times.



Twist

While sitting sideways on the ball, twist your body to the side and hold for 10-15 seconds. Then turn to the other side. Repeat with each side 5 times, trying to increase how far you turn each time.



Supine Stretch

Lay flat on the ground on your back and place feet up on the ball. Roll the ball gently by bending and straightening your legs. For additional challenge, stretch your legs out as wide as they can go to either side and reach forward with your hands to roll or bounce the ball.



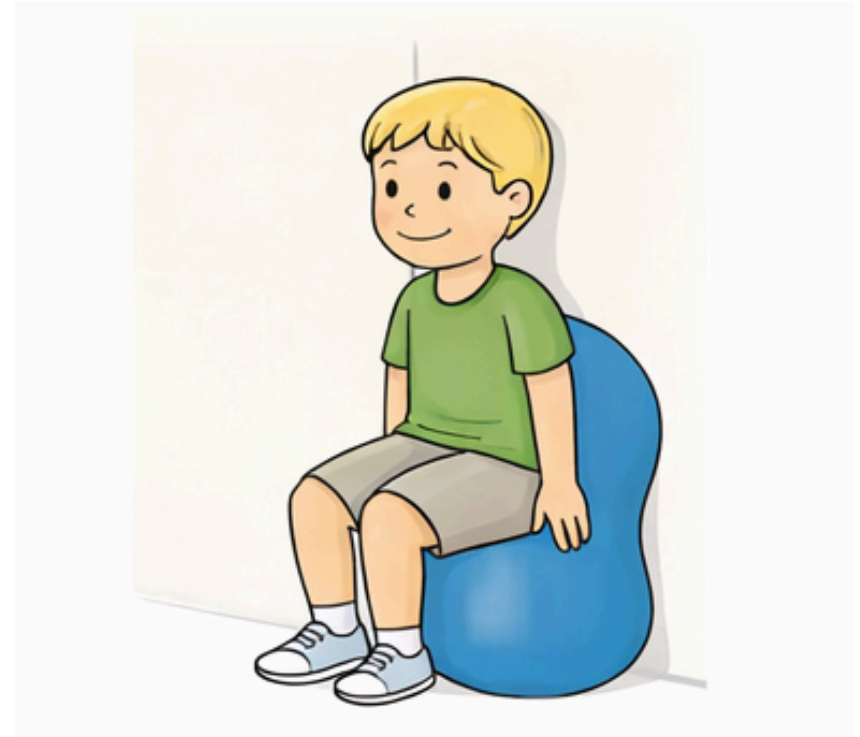
Push-Up

Lay with your stomach against the ground. Place your feet up on the ball behind you. Push up with your arms as high as you can go. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat 5 times. For additional challenge raise an arm and/or leg as you hold your body in the push-up pose.



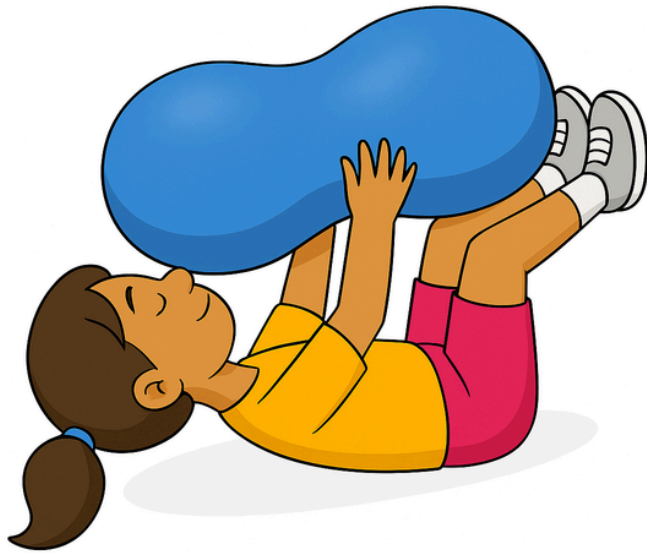
Tummy Time

Balance lengthwise against the ball. This can be done with feet firmly on the ground and arms hugging the ball, or you can add challenge by lifting your arms and legs. Hold poses for 10–15 seconds and repeat 5 times.



Wall Sit

Set the ball upright against a wall. Balance against it while holding a sitting position as if you were in a chair. Hold for 10–15 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



Ball Lift

Lay flat on your back and lift the ball using hands and legs. Your legs can be bent with the ball resting on your knees, or you can straighten your legs and grip the ball between your feet. Hold pose for 10-15 seconds, then lower the ball gently. Repeat 5 times.



Bridge

Press your feet down on the ball and lifting your hips and back to make a "bridge." Hold for 10-15 seconds. Repeat 5 times.



Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing can be an important part of cool-down activities after exercise sessions. Cooling down should be part of every exercise routine as it helps return participants' heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature to normal levels. Deep breathing contributes to this by calming the body. It slows the nervous system, decreases heart rate, and increases oxygen flow. Of course, deep breathing can also be used as a transition or resting break between activities.

Try these deep breathing techniques that are particularly engaging for young children. While they all follow the same premise, you might find some children are able to visualize and follow some techniques more easily than others. **Do five repetitions of the technique of your choice.**

- **Balloon Breathing (Tummy Breaths)**

- *How to teach it:* Place hands on the belly. Take a slow breath in and feel the belly rise like a balloon. Breathe out slowly and feel the belly fall.
- *Child-friendly script:* “Fill your belly up like a big balloon... and now slowly let the air out.”
- *Additional tips:* Can direct a child to lay down and place a bean bag against their stomachs. They can feel/watch the bean bag rise and fall as they breathe. Can also use a Hoberman sphere as a visual prop.



- **Bumblebee Breathing (Humming Breaths)**

- *How to teach it:* Place hands over ears. Take a deep breath in through the nose. As you breathe out, make a soft humming or buzzing sound like a bee. Keep shoulders relaxed and the sound gentle.
- *Child-friendly script:* “Plug your ears and take a deep breath through your nose... and now buzz quietly like a bee...bzzz.”



**Images generated using AI*



Breathing Exercises (continued...)

- **Smell-the-Rose, Blow-Out-the-Candle**

- *How to teach it:* Pretend you are holding a rose. Take a big sniff. Then pretend you are holding a candle, and blow it out with a long, soft breath.
- *Child-friendly script:* “Smell your pretty flower... now blow out your candle nice and slow.”



- **Rainbow Breathing**

- *How to teach it:* Start with arms down beside your body. Take a slow breath in while lifting both arms in an arc over the head. Breathe out slowly as you bring your arms back down. Repeat while imagining different colors with each arc you do.
- *Child-friendly script:* “Take a big breath as you paint your red rainbow stripe up...and blow out as your arms make the rainbow fall back down.”



- **Back-to-Back Breathing**

- *How to teach it:* Sit on the floor with a partner. Turn so you are not facing each other and place your backs together. Take slow breaths, synching with each other's breathing.
- *Child-friendly script:* “Sit back-to-back so you can feel each other. On the count of three, take a deep breath in...let it out together.”



**Images generated using AI*