

What is Yoga?

A discussion book for little yogis

By Giselle Shardlow
Kids Yoga Stories

Welcome to your own yoga journey. What does yoga mean to you?

Yoga is a way of life that exercises the mind and body. Where do you think it was invented?

Yoga first began in India. Thousands of years ago, a group of people went to live up in the mountains. They spent their days watching and listening to their environment. What do you think they saw and heard?

They sat with their legs crossed, their hands on their knees, their spines straight up to the sky and their eyes closed. They learned to sit for long periods of time listening to their breath and the sounds of the forest. Can you sit like a yogi?

The yogis also made up poses that looked like their environment. They practiced tree pose, dog pose and, mountain pose. Can you imagine what poses they created?

Some time later, a great Indian sage named Patanjali wrote a book called *The Yoga Sutras*. Patanjali teaches us to be honest, happy, accepting, healthy, and respectful of ourselves, others, and our environment. What do you think are the qualities of a good person?

Today, yoga is practiced by people all around the world. People of all different shapes, sizes, and cultures practice yoga. Do you know anyone who practices yoga?

Now it's time to start your yoga class and begin your own special yoga journey. First, sit like a yogi. Cross your legs, put your hands on your knees, sit with a tall spine and close your eyes. Listen to your breath just like the yogis did on the top of the mountain thousands of years ago. Can you breathe like a yogi?

Now that your mind is calm and focused, you need to wake up your body. What can you do to warm up each part of your body?

Now that your body is warmed up, let's do some yoga poses. Each posture has two names, one in English and one in Sanskrit. Sanskrit is an ancient language from India that the first yogis used to name the postures. First let's try Tree Pose (Trikonsana in Sanskrit) which is good for practicing balance. What are some other poses you know?

Downward Dog or Ardha Mukha Shavasana is useful for strengthening your arms and legs. Bridge Pose is a back bending posture. Butterfly Pose or Badda Konasana is a forward bending pose to calm your mind. Do you feel any different after practicing your poses?

Now that you have worked on building your strength and flexibility, it's quiet yoga time. Lie on your back. Let your mind and body relax completely. Why do you think it's important to relax yourself?

To end our class, sit like a yogi and bring your hands together in front of your heart. Let's say the yogi promise, "May All Beings be Happy and Free" – or in Sanskrit, Lokah Samastah Sukhino Bhavantu.

I hope you enjoyed your *What is Yoga? Discussion Book!* Please let me know if you found the book useful in learning more about yoga. Feel free to share with your friends and family.

Namaste,

Giselle

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giselle@kidsyogastories.com

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