

# Creative Yoga for Children

40 Fun  
Ready-to-Teach  
Lessons for  
Ages 4-12



Inspiring the Whole Child through Yoga,  
Songs, Literature, and Games

**Adrienne Rawlinson**

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Forty Fun, Ready-to-Teach Lessons  
for Ages Four through Twelve



**Adrienne Rawlinson**



North Atlantic Books  
Berkeley, California

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*This book is for Steve, Julia, and Luke—I love you.*



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# Introduction

Welcome to our program! *Creative Yoga for Children* is the product of many years of observing children in both yoga and Montessori classes. After teaching both Montessori and yoga, I have observed that the likenesses between the two are abundant. We know that yoga is the process of uniting the body and mind to become clearer and more centered. Montessori education is a holistic, hands-on approach to education that includes physical movement. So when combined, these two philosophies can only complement one another. This book merges the two practices into a fluid and beneficial program.

I have created a program that is completely accessible to all educators and parents, not just Montessori or yoga teachers. The classes are individually and logically laid out. They are divided into easy-to-use, age-appropriate parts (ages four to six, seven to nine, and ten to twelve). The classes help develop each child's conceptions of many subjects while remaining active and fun.

Like any learning environment, an engaging yoga class has a centering effect on children. It aids in constructing their confidence from the inside out. There is no huge emphasis on producing an end product, just a joy in the process. Children always feel successful in yoga; there is no competition, just an individual progression. Any child can enjoy yoga.

I believe in creating an environment that feeds a young child's need for order, movement, sensorial exploration, and language. This notion has been at the center of my yoga program. My teaching experiences have taught me that children's minds are at their optimal period for learning and absorbing the world's lessons and experiences before the age of twelve. These too are the key years for introducing them to the world of yoga.

*Creative Yoga for Children* provides a contemporary extension to traditional classroom activities. The child's understanding of specific educational topics is reinforced through a series of yoga poses, activities, and games. I know you will find this compilation of classes, developed from my years as a teacher and yoga instructor, to be beneficial to the children in your lives.

## **Move, Connect, and Learn**

I remember my first taste of yoga. It was in our family room in Montreal in the 1970s. My mother would watch a morning yoga show, and I would rush to join her for our half hour together. The lady on the show doing poses fascinated me. I would giggle as I did the lotus, the crow, and other postures that introduced me to a whole new world. There were breathing exercises and even Sanskrit names for postures—how different! Of course, I was oblivious at the age of six to the monumental benefits of yoga. I just loved the time with my mom and the process of connecting and doing something together that put no pressure on either of us. This memory stands out vividly to me.

Now I realize that this little adventure mom and I shared left me with a feeling of acceptance, togetherness, and peace. Neither of us could actually do the poses, but this was irrelevant.

Years later I became a busy teacher and mother of my own two children. Yoga was no longer a part of my daily life. It was not until I felt a need to decompress and slow my busy life down that I took my first yoga class again in more than thirty years. The feeling of being right in the moment, of being soothed and satisfied, returned to me again. I wanted to pursue and explore my newfound feelings.

I then immersed myself in my yoga practice. After obtaining my yoga teaching certification, I realized that I could apply yoga principles to the classroom. Kids had always been my comfort zone. The concept of harmonizing yoga with holistic education was the perfect fit!

I began to take various training workshops on teaching yoga to kids, all full of wonderful, usable ideas. After those workshops, it was time to get out there, culminate my training and experience, and give my children's yoga class a go.

I taught in churches, community centers, yoga studios, and even my own children's school as an extracurricular activity.

My enthusiasm grew, as did that of my students. My experience has always been that the key to success of any educational program is to methodically observe the needs of each individual child. So I learned from the kids by listening to and watching them. Consequently, I began to perfect my ideas and modify things I had planned to do, all in response to their input. Children, as we know, are infinitely wise, are honest, and have not yet constructed any walls to protect them from the world around them. I discovered that children were able to best learn concepts and ideas through movement and action. Through connection to movement and each other, children can learn complex concepts, such as our place in the universe, and have fun at the same time!

As I tried to find various programs and books to support my children's yoga practice, I realized that the existing resources available did not provide a "turnkey program," or a program I could immediately implement in the classroom. All the books I found required the reader to assemble classes from lists of poses and games. Subsequently, I developed classes for all age groups based on principles that can be implemented easily by anyone, saving them time in putting classes together.

While so many books I have used are helpful, I believe *Creative Yoga for Children* is uniquely user friendly. All my classes are laid out, step by step, from beginning to end. We have such limited time as educators and parents these days, so this book does all the planning for us.

My classes have evolved based on participant feedback. I have incorporated new poses suggested by the children, and our group discussions provided me with endless energy and ideas for new activities.

## Creative Yoga for Children

If any idea or activity in this collection can instill a feeling of connection and belonging within a few children, as my morning of television yoga sessions with my mom did in me, then my purpose is served.

If we all feel a part of one another, uniting us and instilling an appreciation of each other, then the connection is made. What more can we want for our children?

## Creative Yoga for Children: From Preschool through Elementary

### Where Do We Start?

We know that yoga is a wonderful tool used to promote the physical, emotional, and social development of children. Many programs offer this to our kids. However, the content of the *Creative Yoga for Children* classes not only addresses these fundamental needs of children but also offers a substantial innovation to an already established entity.

We begin our program by teaching such yoga fundamentals as poses, breathing techniques, and centering activities. Gradually, we blend these activities with those that also promote educational objectives. This is a very easy process, as the yogic and educational topics complement each other naturally.

The *Creative Yoga for Children* program is broken into three age groups: ages four to six, seven to nine, and ten to twelve.

### Classes for Ages Four to Six

Children at this stage of development crave a logical order and flow to the classes every time. This makes them feel secure and confident. We allow time for them to repeat activities and poses. This repetition seals concepts in their minds. The props we use at this level appeal to the children's senses and their need to learn through touch and manipulation.

The collection of classes for our four- to six-year-olds promotes the following:

- Grace and courtesy
- Sensorial exploration and movement
- Coordination
- Balance
- Refinement of the writing hand
- Order
- Care of our environment, both indoors and outdoors
- Language
- Math
- Cooperation
- Artistic expression
- Self-care
- Physical health
- Self-awareness

## Classes for Ages Seven to Nine

At this age children enter into a new plane of development. This is a more intellectual period than that of the four- to six-year-old child, and we now see a more reasoning, inquisitive personality emerge. The classes for this age group are designed to bring children into the world of abstract learning within a bigger social group that works together. These classes also offer more interactive group activities, supporting this need in each child.

Our classes for seven- to nine-year-olds classes build on these concepts and incorporate the following additional elements:

- Connection to those immediately around us
- Care of our planet
- Trust
- Karma yoga (giving back to the world and to each other)

## Creative Yoga for Children

- Empathy
- Intuition
- Language enrichment
- Gratitude
- Respect for the social group
- The ability to listen and to interpret ideas
- Imagination

## Classes for Ages Ten to Twelve

The main goal of these classes is to develop a global vision within the child, who now wants to understand how the world functions and his or her place in it. Children in this age group are now able to analyze facts and generate new ideas and opinions. These classes leverage age-appropriate capabilities and will help children develop gratitude for the earth, the universe, and themselves.

Finally, our ten- to twelve-year-old children explore the following notions:

- Body changes
- Peer pressure
- Preparation for studying and the development of work habits
- Organization
- Community service
- Stress
- Reaching out beyond their inner circle of friends and family to the community

## The Anatomy of a Class

It is comforting to a child to establish an ordered routine to the classes, just as order is so important in a child's home life.

Children take great satisfaction in knowing how each class is going to play out. This notion is a little less important as the child gets older,

and of course we often have to improvise depending on the day, the children's moods, the weather, and just about any other variable!

All the classes will contain the following activities: Educational Elements, Props, Intention, Warm-up, Connect, Activity, Meditation, and Gratitude. Additionally, they may contain some other activities. The following is the complete list of activities that may be found in each class:

1. **Intention.** We discuss how we are feeling and then what we will focus on that day in class. For example, we might focus on the development of respect for nature, which we would explore by taking a trip to the park. Our goal might be to feel ultimately grateful for the natural world. We will revisit our intention whenever needed throughout the class.
2. **Warm-up.** This is a fun time of stretching and a series of interconnected poses or "vinyasas."
3. **Connect.** These are activities that stress how we all need one another—perhaps we might rub our hands together to create hot energy and connect our hands together in a circle, noticing how this feels. It is during this activity that we stress our need for human connection and how if we support and help one another, we can accomplish anything.
4. **Activity.** These are thematic activities based on the intention for the day's class and can involve large group games with music or dancing.
5. **Breath.** We introduce a new type of breathing technique or practice a cooling or heating breath.
6. **Arts and crafts.** This relates to our previous activities. For example, we may draw mandalas if we are discussing how to relax and focus, or we may make a clay model of the body if we are discussing muscles and bones.
7. **Book.** A book or story may be used to reinforce the intention of the class.



8. **Partner pose.** Partner poses are fun at any age, and we often introduce a new one in each class.
9. **Meditation.** This is often what kids look forward to and what they need the most. We relax, lie down on our mats, close our eyes, and enjoy a guided meditation for at least five minutes, accompanied by music. Some children enjoy a little foot and toe massage during this time, and I like to apply different scented lotions to add to the experience. They love this!
10. **Gratitude.** Once we come out of meditation, we take a few minutes to silently be grateful for something in our lives—perhaps our friends or our health. We sit for a moment and then end the class by repeating the word “Namaste,” with our hands to our hearts. This means that we salute and honor each other.

In addition to these activities, each class will also contain reference to recommended “Props” and “Educational Elements.” The “Props” are the recommended materials for each of the classes. These are items that I have found easy to obtain and may already be in your classroom. The educational elements are concepts that will be reinforced in each individual class.


Supporting all of these activities is music. This seems to be a key ingredient in all the classes, and I find that this is an ever-changing component. It is important to keep this element of the class alive and exciting. I recommend having different genres of music on hand. Children love to hear songs that they are familiar with and can dance to, as well as music for relaxation.



# Part I:

# Class Themes

## Four- to Six-Year-Olds

1. Introduction to Yoga #1
  2. Introduction to Yoga #2
  3. Colors
  4. The Sea
  5. Winter
  6. The Circus
  7. Halloween
  8. The Universe and Beyond
  9. Going to the Park
  10. Our Earth
  11. The Holiday Season
  12. Amazing Flowers
  13. Mysteries
  14. The Skeleton
  15. Sounds and Words
  16. Shapes and Numbers
  17. Forest Life
  18. Sniff, Touch, and Listen
  19. Metamorphosis
  20. Point of Arrival Class
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