

Yoga

"Blessed are the flexible for they will not be bent out of shape."

—Betsy Shirley



Pre-Reading

A. Warm-Up Questions

1. How would you define *yoga*?
2. Which verb do you use with yoga?
3. Can you name any yoga poses?
4. What health benefits does yoga offer?

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match the words on the left with the correct meanings on the right.

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. philosophy | a) awareness |
| _____ 2. enlightenment | b) stress or tightness |
| _____ 3. limb | c) the ability to bend freely |
| _____ 4. posture | d) the study of knowledge or experience |
| _____ 5. spine | e) the backbone |
| _____ 6. still | f) a branch of something, such as a leg or field of study |
| _____ 7. flexibility | g) to repeat a phrase or sound over and over |
| _____ 8. depression | h) a low mood characterized by sadness or hopelessness |
| _____ 9. tension | i) to not make or allow any movement |
| _____ 10. mat | j) a cushioning piece of material that is placed on the floor |
| _____ 11. chant | k) relaxing and calming |
| _____ 12. soothing | l) a way of positioning the body |

Reading

1. Yoga is a practice that connects the body, mind, and breath. The word *yoga* comes from the Sanskrit word *yuj*, meaning *to unify*. Yoga started as a **philosophy** in India about 5,000 years ago.
2. The Yoga Sutra is a set of guidelines that explain how to **still** the mind and achieve **enlightenment** through yoga. These words of wisdom were written over 2,000 years ago. The guidebook is divided into eight **limbs**. Each limb focuses on a different practice, such as concentration or meditation.
3. In modern yoga classes, the main focus is on physical **postures** (*asana*). Yoga poses open the **spine** and allow energy to flow through the body. Some basic yoga poses include the *mountain pose*, the *tree pose*, and the *warrior pose*. While holding a pose, participants pay attention to their breathing and try to still their minds. More advanced poses require greater strength and **flexibility**.
4. Yoga has many health benefits. In addition to improving one's physical strength, flexibility, and balance, it can improve one's mind. Many health experts recommend yoga to those who suffer from **depression** or stress. The breathing and relaxation exercises help reduce **tension** in the body and soul.
5. Yoga does not require any special equipment. Comfortable, fitted clothing, bare feet, and a yoga **mat** are recommended. Many yoga instructors also recommend doing yoga on an empty stomach. A class typically lasts for 30–45 minutes, but many people do yoga on their own time. At the beginning and end of a yoga session, participants **chant** "Om." This **soothing** sound helps connect participants to the universe.

The Yoga Sutra

8 LIMBS

1. restraints (*the yamas*)
2. observances (*niyamas*)
3. postures (*asana*)
4. breathing (*pranayama*)
5. withdrawal of senses (*pratyahara*)
6. concentration (*dharana*)
7. meditation (*dhyani*)
8. absorption (*samadhi*)

Comprehension

Read the statements below. Write T if the statement is true.

Write F if the statement is false, and correct the information in your notebook. Write NM if the fact is not mentioned.

- _____ 1. The Yoga Sutra is a guidebook on reaching enlightenment through yoga.
- _____ 2. The Warrior is an advanced yoga pose.
- _____ 3. The word yoga means *to focus*.
- _____ 4. Most yoga poses focus on opening up the lungs.
- _____ 5. More people in India practice yoga than anywhere else in the world.
- _____ 6. Yoga helps remove tension from the body and mind.
- _____ 7. It is a good idea to wear socks in yoga class.

Vocabulary Review

Complete the sentences using vocabulary from page 1.

- 1. I want to improve my _____ for ballet, so I am taking yoga.
- 2. At the end of the session, we will _____ again.
I hope you find it _____.
- 3. You can bring your own _____
or use one that is provided by the instructor.
- 4. I find it difficult to _____ my mind.
I am always worried about something.
- 5. I have poor _____ when I sit at my desk.
My _____ is never straight.
- 6. The _____ of a human are legs and arms,
while the _____ of a tree are branches.

Pronunciation Fun

OM / AUM

At the beginning and end of a yoga session, participants traditionally chant *Om* (also *Aum*). This soothing sound represents the sounds of the universe. The chant helps humans become unified with all living things.

Let's try it!

The word *Om* is pronounced like home without /h/. When chanted it has three separate sounds followed by a moment of silence. Try this with your classmates:

1. Take a deep breath in.
2. Open your mouth and say "awe."
Use the back of your throat.
3. Blend the "awe" sound into an "oh" sound.
4. Blend the "oh" into an "mmm" sound.
Let your top and bottom front teeth gently touch.
5. Break and feel the silence.
6. Repeat the chant.

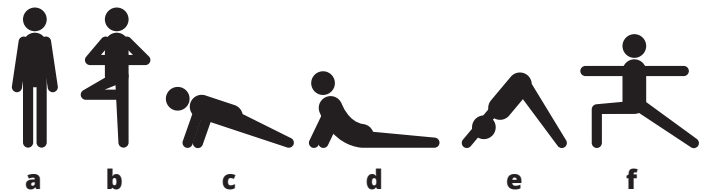
Discussion

1. Why do you think people who are serious about yoga are vegetarians?
2. Why is it important to have bare feet for yoga?
3. Why do more women go to yoga class than men?
4. How does yoga compare to other exercise classes that you are familiar with?
5. Why isn't yoga recommended for children under the age of 12?

Guess the Yoga Pose

Work with a partner. Try to match the names of the yoga poses to the diagrams.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|
| _____ 1. plank | _____ 4. warrior |
| _____ 2. downward dog | _____ 5. mountain |
| _____ 3. tree | _____ 6. cobra |



Now try to do a pose, and see if your classmates can guess which one it is.