

2.5 Learn Yoga from Animals

Since the year 2015, the world has been celebrating June 21st as International Yoga Day. As most of us will know, yoga is a culture of physical, mental and spiritual discipline perfected in ancient India. Yoga as an ancient Indian discipline is a composite practice, involving the complete mind-body-soul complex that is a human being. Here, let us focus on yoga as an integrated system of physical exercises that help us to attain concentration, focus and also improve flexibility, balance, and strength.

From an ancient Indian discipline, let us move to a very contemporary area of research. Experts today are doing a wonderful job of drawing us into the world of biomimicry. In simple terms, bio means life and mimicry is to emulate. Basically biomimicry is the science of solving human problems with solutions already present in the natural world. From this point of view, yoga is also a form of biomimicry where in typical asanas or poses, we emulate mountains, trees, fish, cats, and so many more animals! This helps solve our problems brought on by day to day living – such as stiffness and back pain – and allows us to feel physically vibrant and mentally sharp.

Before we proceed further, here are a few basic precautions regarding yoga practice:

1. If you are a beginner, you should start practising yoga either in the presence of a yoga teacher or join yoga class so that you learn the basics and the do's and don'ts of yoga.

2. Asanas should be practised in a clean, airy and well-lit room. The floor should be level. It is advisable to use a yoga mat. If it is not possible to practise indoors, you may practise on level ground outdoors.

3. The best time to practise is in the morning before breakfast or in the evening before dinner.

Some of the poses described below must be learnt from an instructor before you attempt to practise them on your own.



- ⌘ Where was yoga perfected?
- ⌘ What does yoga involve?
- ⌘ What are the benefits of yoga?

- ⌘ What is biomimicry?
- ⌘ In what way is yoga a form of biomimicry?

- emulate : imitate
- vibrant : full of energy and life

- posture : the position in which you hold your body while sitting or standing
- tone : Here, it means firmness of muscle

Demonstration:

Read out the steps, and as you read out, indicate the expected action with appropriate gestures or actions. Make sure that the viewers understand by asking questions such as 'Is that clear?'

- navel : belly button
- assume : Here, it means 'take'.

Let us look at a few well known animal poses in yoga:



Bhujangasana is a beginner's pose. Bhujanga in Sanskrit means a cobra. Bhujangasana is a pose that resembles the posture of a cobra with raised head. This asana helps you tone the muscles of the back and strengthens your spine. It also benefits the chest and shoulders.

Steps:

1. Lie face down. Relax all the muscles completely so that you are completely at ease.
2. Place your palms on the sides just below your shoulders.
3. Breathe in deeply as you slowly raise your head.
4. Then smoothly raise the upper part of your body.
5. Do not come up with a jerk. Let your movement be smooth and flowing.
6. Come up slowly so that you feel the movement of the spine vertebra by vertebra.
7. Curve the spine well.
8. The navel must keep touching the ground.

Hold the breath in this position to a count of twenty. Then come down slowly while you breathe out.

To start with you can repeat the process six times.



Simhasana or **Lion Pose** is a favourite with young people. In this asana, you assume the sitting position and facial expression of a lion. Although there may be a number of steps, this pose really requires very little effort.

Steps :

1. Sit with your legs folded under you so that your toes are pointing straight behind and you are sitting on your heels.

2. Keep your spine straight but as relaxed as possible.

3. Close your eyes and focus your attention on the centre of the forehead. In yoga, this point is often referred to as the third eye.

4. Closing your mouth, touch your palette (roof of your mouth) with your tongue.

5. Take a deep breath through your nose while your tongue is still touching your palette.

6. Exhale in one strong move while sticking out your tongue and opening your jaws as much as possible. Also, your arms should be thrown out and stretched with your fingers splayed.

7. Roar at the top of your voice while exhaling. The roar should be with a 'Haa' sound and should not be a long drawn out one. Rather, it should be one strong explosion of breath that empties your lungs in the shortest time possible.

8. Hold this pose for between 20 and 30 seconds.

Do not inhale immediately after this pose inhale, after a few seconds.

Repeat 5 or 6 times.

This asana (posture) gets its name from the way you stick your tongue out as far as possible and the way you hold your fingers splayed out, resembling a roaring lion.

Marjaryasana is a very popular cat pose. This too, is a simple asana for beginners that stretches the muscles of the abdomen and the back.

Marjaryasana should be part of your morning yoga routine as it will gently stretch your muscles and get rid of any bodyaches.



- splayed : spread apart

Role play:

✿ Read the steps aloud as though you are instructing someone who is practising the pose as per your instructions.

Add appropriate encouraging words and phrases such as 'That's right!', 'Slowly, now'.

Pair-work :

Give a demonstration of the 'asana', in a pair. One person reads out the steps, and the other person demonstrates the action. Rehearse the activity before you present it in the classroom.

The teacher should allow the students enough time in the classroom to plan and practise their role play and demonstrations.

Steps :

1. Start on your hands and knees so that your back is raised in a 'tabletop' position.

2. Make sure that your knees are positioned directly below your hips. Your wrists, elbows and shoulders should be in line and perpendicular to the floor.

3. Centre your head in a neutral position, with your eyes looking at the floor.

4. As you exhale, smoothly arch your spine upwards towards the ceiling, making sure to keep your shoulders and knees in position.

5. Release your head toward the floor, but don't force your chin to your chest.

Inhale and come back to the neutral 'tabletop' position on your hands and knees.

To start with, you can repeat the process six times.



Garudasana or the **Eagle Pose** enhances your body's ability to balance itself. It also strengthens the leg muscles and improves the flexibility of the joints by loosening the joint muscles.

Steps :

1. Stand straight on both feet. Raise the right leg and wrap it around the left leg

2. The right thigh should be over the left thigh and the right feet should touch the calf muscles from behind.

3. Similarly, wrap the right hand around the left hand.

4. Now place the palms together to resemble the beak of an eagle.

5. Try to maintain the balance and slowly bend the left leg and lower the body until right toes touch the ground.

6. Try to remain in this pose for long as you can maintain the balance.

After this asana, relax for some time before you repeat the process.



Ustrasana or **Camel Pose** strengthens the back; opens the shoulders, chest, and quadriceps; it also boosts mood and energy. This yoga posture adds flexibility and strength to the body and also helps in improving digestion.

Steps :

1. Kneel on the yoga mat and place your hands on the hips.

2. Your knees should be in line with the shoulders and the sole of your feet should be facing the ceiling.

3. As you inhale, draw in your tail-bone towards the pubis as if being pulled from the navel.

4. Simultaneously, arch your back and slide your palms over your feet till the arms are straight.

5. Do not strain or flex your neck but keep it in a neutral position.

6. Stay in this posture for a couple of breaths.

7. Breathe out and slowly come back to the initial pose. Withdraw your hands and bring them back to your hips as you straighten up.

Note: You may place a cushion below your knees to ease your way into the pose.

- quadriceps : the large muscle at the front of the thigh

Demonstration:

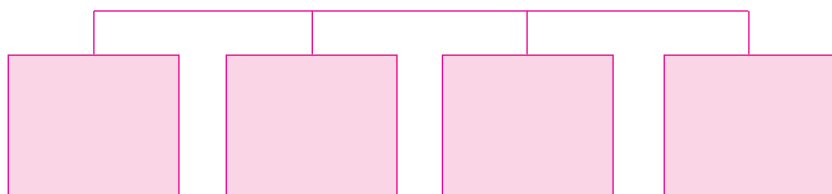
Form groups of 6-8. One person or a pair gives demonstration while others ask questions or make statements to present their difficulties. The demonstrator assures them that it is not necessary to achieve everything the first time, they should take it easy.

ENGLISH WORKSHOP

1. Complete the following diagrams.

(A)

Benefits of yoga



The teacher should see that as many students as possible get the opportunity to participate in the classroom demonstrations, role play, etc.

(B)

Precautions in Yoga Practice



(C)

What is Yoga ?



2. **Prepare charts** for each one of the asanas described in the passage. Use the following points :
- Name (in English, in your mother tongue)
 - Meaning in English
 - General information
 - Steps and pictures
 - Benefits

3. List the names of body parts used in the passage.

4. List the adverbs/adverbial phrases used in the passage.

5. Language Study : **Conjunctions** : A conjunction is a word which joins words or clauses. Look at the following sentences.

1. **Sahil and Rohan** go to school together.
2. **Sahil is drawing a picture and Rahul is playing football.**

In sentence 1, the conjunction 'and' joins two words.

In sentence 2, the conjunction 'and' joins two clauses.

The following are some more examples of conjunction.

- Do you like cricket or football?
- Your parents will be happy if you study well.
- She has not come to school because she is ill.
- We played well, but we lost the match.
- Tell him that we are going to the playground.
- When you are at home, you should help your mother in her work.

Interjections : An interjection is a word that expresses a sudden feeling or emotion. Interjections can express joy, grief, surprise, pain, approval etc.

Look at the following examples.

1. Hurrah! We have won the game. (Joy)
2. Ouch! That hurt. (Pain)
3. Wow! What a nice picture! (Approval)