

Musical Movement Play:
The Benefits of Mindful Movement in Children’s Music Lessons
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- I. Benefits: Physical, Emotional, and Cognitive
 - a. Physical: Balances energy levels; Balance, coordination, body awareness; Core strength (posture/alignment, core stability)
 - b. Cognitive: Concentration/attention; Memory; Executive function skills
 - c. Emotional: Relieves tension and stress (=better learning)
 - d. Musical: Auditory processing/responsiveness; Development of vestibular system
- II. “Developmental progression:” Gross, then fine motor skills
 - a. Body scale: Do (forward fold) to sol (upward salute)—singbacks, ear training
 - b. Conducting: duple and triple meter
- III. Welcome Song
 - a. Sets up a regular structure to the class
 - b. 5 Directional Movements of Spine:
 - i. Axial extension (posture/alignment)
 - ii. Backbends (energizing)
 - iii. Forward bends (calming)
 - iv. Lateral bends (deeper breathing)
 - v. Twists (release tension)
- IV. Arm Weight: “Sleeping Turtle”
- V. Pulse with flowing movement
 - a. “Walking Warrior”
- VI. Postural Stability (axial extension)
 - a. Axial extension
 - i. Staff pose
 1. Wrist warm-ups: flatten and lift hand, moving from slow to fast
 - ii. Downward-facing dog
 - iii. Chair pose
 - iv. Table pose: “Setting the table”
 - b. Core strengtheners
 - i. Frog pose
 - ii. Crocodile pose
- VII. Cross-Lateral Poses (great for “Brain Breaks”)
 - a. Easiest to hardest: Sprinkler, Eagle, Balancing table
 - b. Dancing with scarves, conducting
 - c. Games: “Hot Cross Buns,” “Pat-a-Cake,” “Simon Says”
 - d. Cross-lateral flow movement
 - i. Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (“Star” and “twisted star”)
 - ii. Balance poses: Focus and Stability (Flamingo pose)
 - iii. Merrily We Roll Along (Boat pose)
- VIII. Forward fold: “Gorilla” pose

- IX. Breath work:
 - a. Balloon: Deep diaphragmatic breath
 - b. Bunny breath: Energizing
 - c. Bumblebee breath: Pitch matching
 - d. Lion’s breath: Energizing, developing singing voice
- X. Supine Restorative
 - a. Legs-up-the-wall (“candle”): Candle breath: Extended exhalation
 - b. Hibernating bear
 - c. Blanket/stuffed animal
 - d. “Burrito” pose

Sequencing:

- Begin with a breathing or imagery exercise
- Use standing poses first and most
- Use “brain breaks” midway through when students lose attention
- Include counterposes (use forward bends after backbends and balance poses)
- Plan transitions: Count down from five between each activity transition and use a chime
- Incorporate games and partner poses near the end
- Finish with restorative poses/breath work

Resources

Resources for lesson plans, props, poses, and games: <http://www.yogainmyschool.com>
 Sample lesson plans for children’s yoga classes: <http://www.kidsyogastories.com>

Books:

Bersma, Danielle and Marjoke Visscher. *Yoga Games for Children: Fun and Fitness with Postures, Movements and Breath*. Alameda, CA: Hunter House Publications, 2003.
 Flynn, Lisa. *Yoga for Children: 200+ Yoga Poses, Breathing Exercises, and Meditations for Healthier, Happier, More Resilient Children*. Avon, MA: Adams Media, 2013.
 McAllister, Lesley. *Yoga in the Music Studio*. New York: Oxford, 2020.

Activity cards:

Flynn, Lisa. *Yoga 4 Classrooms Activity Card Deck*. 4th ed. Dover, NH: Yoga4Classrooms, 2015.
 Guber, Tara and Leah Kalish. *Yoga Pretzels: 50 Fun Yoga Activities for Kids and Grownups*.
 Stewart, Whitney and Mina Braun. *Mindful Kids: 50 Mindfulness Activities*.



Yoga Deck: McAllister, Lesley. *Yoga and Music for Children* (Etsy: “YogaMusicStudio”)