

How to Play “Going to the Beach”

I teach yoga to children ages 4-8, on a weekly basis, at a local yoga studio and I have used many of the activities from Donna Freeman’s fabulous book *“Once Upon a Pose”*. I also teach parents and teachers how to do yoga with children and I wanted to share how effective and fun “Sea Shells” has been with my students.

One of the children’s favourite activities is the “Sea Shells” game, which they request on a weekly basis. I always encourage creativity in my yoga classes and I enjoy empowering children and fostering self-confidence within them by letting them ‘direct’, ‘lead’ and ‘teach’ the class through a yoga pose or share an idea that we all can try.

I have also been blessed to teach highly intelligent, fun and inventive children, so when we started playing “Sea Shells”, I started with having them run to the Sea and to the Shore and then calling out “Sea Shells” and having them do a Yoga Pose. They loved it and we played it so often that I started adding distinctions like Deep Sea vs Shallow Water, and Shoreline vs Shore. This all happened gradually and each week, the children and I would add something new until a story started to emerge.

Each part of the story has a different area of the room that the movement or activity has to be performed in. We ended up with so many movements and activities, that I created a map. We also used some of the poses that are from my book *“What I See, I Can Be: A Guided Yoga Flow for Children”*. This is a wonderful activity because children like to run, which gets their heart rate up, they find it fun wondering what will come next that they will have to dash off to, and they get to incorporate yoga poses into a story.

When I call out “Sea Shells” they choose which yoga pose they are going to do. I encourage them to choose a different yoga pose every time that I call out “Sea Shells”. I also leave the *“What I See, I Can Be”* Full Size Poster in a place that they can easily reference, in case they need an idea for a yoga pose. This helps alleviate any potential stress for young children who may not be able to remember all of the poses or think of a new yoga pose to do in the excitement of running from place to place, and allows them to focus on the fun aspect of the game. This is also an excellent activity because other than the poster, no equipment is required and every one is a winner.

The story goes like this:

“All the children get into the car - mom and dad are taking us to the beach”. – The children then do an excellent abdominal yoga pose by sitting on their bottoms, bend their knees, put their feet in the air and press on the imaginary gas pedals, and their hands are on the steering wheel straight out in front of them. They drive the car to the beach and I call out – *“Faster, Slower, Turn to the right, Turn to the left, Stop at the light, Go again, See the Beach Entrance, Find a Parking Spot”*. This encourages them to hold the pose longer, as they pretend to drive their cars.

“Everyone we have arrived. Time to get out of the car”. – The children stand up.

“Run to the Shoreline and put your Toes in the water. Check the temperature of the water”. – They go to the shoreline.

“Swim to the Deep Sea” – Using their arms they swim as they run to touch anywhere on the back wall.

“You see Dolphins swimming and playing. Go in and join them” - They do the Dolphin Yoga Pose, by placing their hands and forearms on the ground and with their feet behind them, they push their bums into the air as they would in Dog Pose. Then they make their heads move in a circle by coming forward with their body as far as they can go (usually just passed the fingers) and then they swoop back as far as they can go (usually around the elbows).

“Sharks are Circling” – They run in a circle.

“Children in the playground”. – They go to the back corner and pretend to be in a playground.

“There is a Large Boat in the Deep Sea” – They do the Boat Pose from the book **“What I See, I Can Be”**.

“There are large butterflies on the beach. Join the Butterflies” – They do the Butterfly pose from the Yoga Match Game.

“There is a Row Boat in the Shallow Water” – They get up and go to the Shallow Water and they sit on their bottoms, raise their legs in the air and balance in a V pose and move their arms as if rowing the boat.

“Time to Fly a Kite” – They do the Triangular Kite Pose from the book **“What I See, I Can Be”**.

“Time for a healthy lunch. Join Mom and Dad on the Picnic Table and have a Picnic.” – front wall in the middle – sitting down pretending to eat.

“Have to wait after eating before going swimming – Put on sunscreen and Sun tan on the Beach to catch some sun rays”. – They do the Meadow Pose from the book **“What I See, I Can Be”** on the beach.

“I see Oysters on the Beach” – They do the Oyster Pose from **“What I See, I Can Be”**.

“Trees in the Forest” – they do Tree Pose along the front wall. (**Chairs in a Circle in the Forest** - If there are enough children, they make a tight circle with their left shoulder facing into the middle of the circle and their right shoulder on the outside of the circle, and slowly and carefully, they can squat down, until everyone is sitting on someone else’s knees and then they raise their hands in the air. This is known as the **Yoga Chair Pose**, but in this case, with some support from each other. Again, everyone is a winner.)

“Making Sand Castles on the Beach” – they use their imaginations and build sand castles.

“You found a 5 pointed Star Fish on the Beach. Be a Star Fish” – the children lay down and make 5 points with their 2 arms and 2 legs and 1 head.

“It’s finally time to go swimming. Splash in the shallow water”. – the children pretend to splash around.

“Lily Pads in the shallow water” – the children do Full Lotus Pose or Half Lotus Pose, with legs crossed.

“Frog squatting on the Lily Pad” – the children do the Yoga Squat Pose, with knees bent, feet apart and pointing at 45 degrees outward, bum close to the ground, back straight and head pointing to the ceiling.

“Frog jumping off the Lily Pad and eating flies” – the children jump up out of the squat pose and stick their tongue out to catch flies.

“It was a great day and it is time for a photo. Take a picture” – Children pretend to take a picture.

“Smile and Do Your Favourite Yoga Pose for a Group photo” – children smile and freeze in a Yoga Pose as I pretend to take a group photo.

“Catch the last rays of the sun before leaving” – children do the Meadow Pose from **“What I See, I Can Be”**.

During these 24 steps, I will call out Sea Shells randomly 6-7 times as we are going through the story and the children then choose a yoga pose to do. We hope you have as much fun playing **“Going to the Beach”** as we have!

"Going to the Beach" Yoga Game Map

