



## Lesson Plans



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## Stretch for Wellness

**Recommended Grades:** 3-5

**Overview:**

The use of stretching to improve flexibility enhances overall general fitness for both physical and mental well-being. In daily activities, range of joint motion is important for longevity of physical life. Stretching through yoga movement stimulates chemicals which change connective tissue, increasing flexibility.

**Time Duration:** 30-45 minutes

**Standard 4:** Achieves and maintains a health-enhancing level of physical fitness.

**Benchmark: 4-E-1:** Identifies several activities related to each component of health-related fitness.

**4-E-3:** Selects an activity program that is designed to improve health-related fitness.

**Interdisciplinary Connections:**

**Health: Standard 3:** Student will demonstrate the ability to practice positive health behaviors and reduce healthy risks.

**Benchmark: 3-M-1:** Identify personal health needs and develop long-term goals for a healthy lifestyle.

**Objectives:**

1. The student will develop stretching skills for physical fitness to enhance longevity.
2. The student will enhance physical and mental skills through relaxation exercises which promote flexibility.

**Materials:**

Floor mats and/or large towel

Music/ sound system/ microphone

**Background Information:**

*Prior Knowledge:*

Students should have knowledge of the importance of stretching and flexibility. Students need to know the difference between warming-up and stretching. Stretching is more effective with muscles that are already warmed up. If you try to stretch a muscle which is not warmed-up, injury is more probable. Students should understand stretching increases flexibility which promotes overall fitness for life. Students need to understand the benefits of improved flexibility for both the body and the mind.

*Teacher Notes:*

You can use lesson plan four's warm-ups as a preface for this activity. Reinforce the concept of the importance of exercise and proper diet in relationship to achieving proper health. You can preface the activity with a high impact activity which increases the heart rate and blood flow. A recommended time limit for this activity is to hold the stretch for two seconds, relax, and repeat the procedure for eight to twelve repetitions.

**Procedure:**

*Engagement:*

Ask the students if they can give you any reasons why they should stretch their bodies. Ask the students if they understand the difference between stretching and warming-up and the importance of each to the body.

*Lesson Activity:*

1. Have the students get an exercise mat and arrange themselves around the playing area. If it is possible to lower the lightening, this will create more of a relaxed atmosphere.
2. Start playing mellow, relaxing music.
3. Begin the stretching by telling the students to lie perfectly still on their back with their arms extended outward by their side (corpse pose).
4. Students participate in performing the poses listed in Attachment 1.
5. Students end the stretching by relaxing on their abdomen. Have the students lie on their stomachs and rest one cheek on their hands. Tell them to close their eyes and breathe deeply.

*Closure:*

Ask the students how they feel. Can they reach a body part easier now than before the stretch? For example, could you reach only your ankles before, but now you can reach your toes? Do you think stretching is good for your body?

**Assessment:**

See attachment one

**Accommodations/ Modifications:**

The time suggestions for each pose could be shortened to accommodate students who exhibit behaviors such as hyperactivity.

**Development Resources:**

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center. *Yoga: Mind and Body*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc, 1996.

**Reproducible Resources:**

Attachment 1: Relaxation Techniques

Attachment 2: What's in a Stretch?

**Reflections:**

Some of the students had difficulty understanding and executing some of the stretches. You can modify the activity by substituting different stretches which accommodate the group of students you have at that time. Some students who exhibited hyperactivity and food lying still hard to accomplish.

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## **Attachment 1**

### **Relaxation Techniques:**

#### *Corpse Pose*

Lie flat on the back with the legs at least 1 ½ feet apart. Place the arms at an angle of about 45 degrees to the body. No energy should be expended to hold the body in this position. Focus the mind on breathing. Feel the abdomen rise as you inhale and sink as you exhale.

#### *The Plow*

From the corpse pose bring your body into a shoulderstand. Your back, legs, and feet should be as straight up as possible. Your arms are parallel behind you with your hands located on or near the small of your back. From this position lower both your feet to the floor behind your head. Relax and return to the corpse position by reversing the order of motion.

Major benefit: Stretches all regions of the spine and back muscles.

#### *The Bridge*

Start in the corpse pose. While lying flat on your back with your arms at your side, bend both knees and bring the feet flat on the floor close to the buttocks. Raise the hips, and bring the hands onto the back into a back bend. The hips and chest are lifted as much as possible. The feet, head, neck and shoulders are flat on the floor.

#### *The Forward Bend*

Sit with your head, neck, and back in a straight line. The legs are together in front of the body with the knees flat on the floor. Inhale as you stretch both arms with elbows straight over your head next to your ears. Exhale and bend forward from the hips. Reach forward to grab hold of the feet as you bring the chest down toward the thighs. If you cannot grab your toes, then reach as far as you can comfortably without pain.

#### *The Cobra*

Relax on your abdomen. Bring legs together and the forehead to the floor. Place the hands, palms downward, on the ground directly beneath the shoulders. The elbows are bent, slightly raised, and tucked in toward the sides. Fingers point forward with the tips in line with the top of the shoulders. Begin with the head bent downward and the forehead touching the floor. As you inhale, slowly raise the forehead and bring the nose to the floor. Roll the head upward, raising the nose and brushing the chin on the floor. Push the chin forward slowly roll the body up and back. When you have come up as far as is comfortable, breathe as you hold the position.

### *The Bow*

Lying on your abdomen, place the forehead on the floor. Bend the knees, bringing the feet up. Reach back to grasp the respective ankles. The feet should be relaxed. Keep the arms straight and inhale as you arch the entire body upward. Lift the head, chest, and thighs off the floor.

### *The Spinal Twist*

Sit on your heels with the back erect. Keeping both knees bent, lower the hips to the floor so that you are sitting to the left of the feet. Raise the right knee and place the right foot flat on the floor. Allow the left leg to turn on its side with the left foot below the right leg. Place the right foot on the floor outside the left thigh. Place the right hand flat on the floor behind the back but not too far away from the body since this will make you lean rather than twist, compressing the spine instead of giving it a lateral stretch. Raise the left arm straight up over the head and bring the left arm over the right side of the right knee. Reach around to catch hold of the right ankle.

### *The Tree*

Stand up straight, balancing on the right foot. Bend the left knee and, helping with your hand, place the foot against the opposite thigh with the knee pointing outward. Focus on a point straight in front of you. Release your hold on the foot and bring both hands together at the chest in Prayer Position. (Prayer Position: Bringing the hands up from the sides, place the palms flat against each other at the center of the chest. The elbows are pushed out to the side.) Find your balance. Keeping the palms together, slowly extend the arms above the head.

### *The Triangle*

Stand erect, facing directly forward. Place the feet slightly more than shoulder width apart. Balance the weight of the body evenly between the two feet. Inhale as you bring the right arm up alongside the right ear. Stretch the arm up as high as possible, and feel the stretch along the entire right side. Exhale as you bend to the left. Slide the left hand down the left leg as far as possible. Breathe regularly.

### *Relaxing on the Abdomen*

Lying on your front, place one hand on top of the other, turn the head, and rest one cheek on the hands. Close the eyes and breathe deeply, as in the Corpse pose. Feel the abdomen press into the ground as you inhale and rise as you exhale.

## Attachment 2

### What's in a Stretch?

What do you think on a scale from 1 to 3 about how you did the stretches? One means you did your very best and three means you need to work on the stretch some more.

Stretches		1	2	3
Corpse Pose	I can lie perfectly still with my arms and legs extended.			
The Plow	I can touch my toes to the floor behind my head.			
The Bridge	I can do a back bend.			
The Forward Bend	I can touch my toes from a sitting position.			
The Cobra	I can lift my upper body from the floor.			
The Bow	I can lie on my stomach and grab my ankles with my hands.			
The Spinal Twist	I can twist my hips from a sitting position.			
The Tree	I can stand on one foot with my arms extended above my head in prayer position.			
The Triangle	I can reach over the side of my body.			
Relaxing the Abdomen	I can lay flat on my stomach.			