

ROCK AND ROLL



BENEFITS

Tones the spinal muscles, provides deep proprioceptive input, and stimulates the vestibular system, which supports physical balance and behavioral stability. Warms the body quickly. Develops abdominal/core strength. Massages back muscles.

TIME

30 seconds to 1 minute

ACTIVITY

- Place a yoga mat on floor or use another padded surface.
- Lie on back, bend knees toward chest, and grab shins.
- Slowly alternate rocking forward and back on the spine from hips to upper back.
- Press your belly down toward the floor as you roll up and down the spine.
- Go slowly enough that you maintain control and can feel each vertebra of the backbone pressing down toward the floor as you roll.
- Now, while still holding the knees, rock gently from side to side.

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Use this activity to prepare for Boat (p. 65): Without touching your feet to the floor, roll up to sitting bones and balance.
- Circles: Take knees out to the sides as you roll in a circle on your back. Imagine hugging a huge beach ball as you roll.
- As a calming activity, grasp knees and move them in small circles. This massages the low back, hips, and sacrum and stimulates a relaxation response.
- Use in lesson plan on anatomy and the skeletal system.

NOTES

Children with decreased discrimination of vestibular and proprioceptive information often exhibit poor posture, frequent falling, clumsiness, poor balance, constant moving and fidgeting, and poor attention. Treatment options like rolling provide vestibular and proprioceptive information and improve postural responses.

Using a yoga mat or padding and going slowly are important in this exercise to protect the bones of the back.



ROOTS

BENEFITS

Grounds, calms, and centers students. Strengthens ankles, feet, and postural muscles. Develops balance, personal awareness, and a sense of competence. Excellent activity for focusing students before a lesson.

TIME

1 to 2 minutes

ACTIVITY

- Stand with feet hip-width apart and pointing straight ahead (Mountain, p. 79).
- Rock forward and back with body Activated (firm and straight) and feet firmly on the floor.
- Make the rocking movement smaller and smaller until you balance on the center of your feet.
- Now rock side to side and then slowly return to center.
- Begin making big circles to the right. Notice how your weight shifts to the four edges of each foot as you circle. Notice how the foot muscles work to keep you upright.
- Make the circles smaller and smaller until you again come back to center.
- Make big circles to the left now. Then make circles smaller until back at center.

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Try the same activity with eyes closed.
- Invite students who snowboard, ski, or skateboard to share what they know about using the muscles in their feet to do these sports.
- Ask students to think about what it is that they are circling around, then share their responses.
- Use as a precursor to class lesson on gravity.
- Ask students to discuss what it means to be “centered.”

NOTES

Roots is a terrific activity for teaching the alignment principle of grounding the four corners of the feet (p. 56) and is good preparation for standing balance poses such as Tree (p. 91) and Dancer (p. 72).



SHOULDER CLOCK



BENEFITS

Energizes and grounds. Develops cooperation and sensitivity. Stretches upper chest, shoulders, and arm muscles.

TIME

4 minutes

ACTIVITY

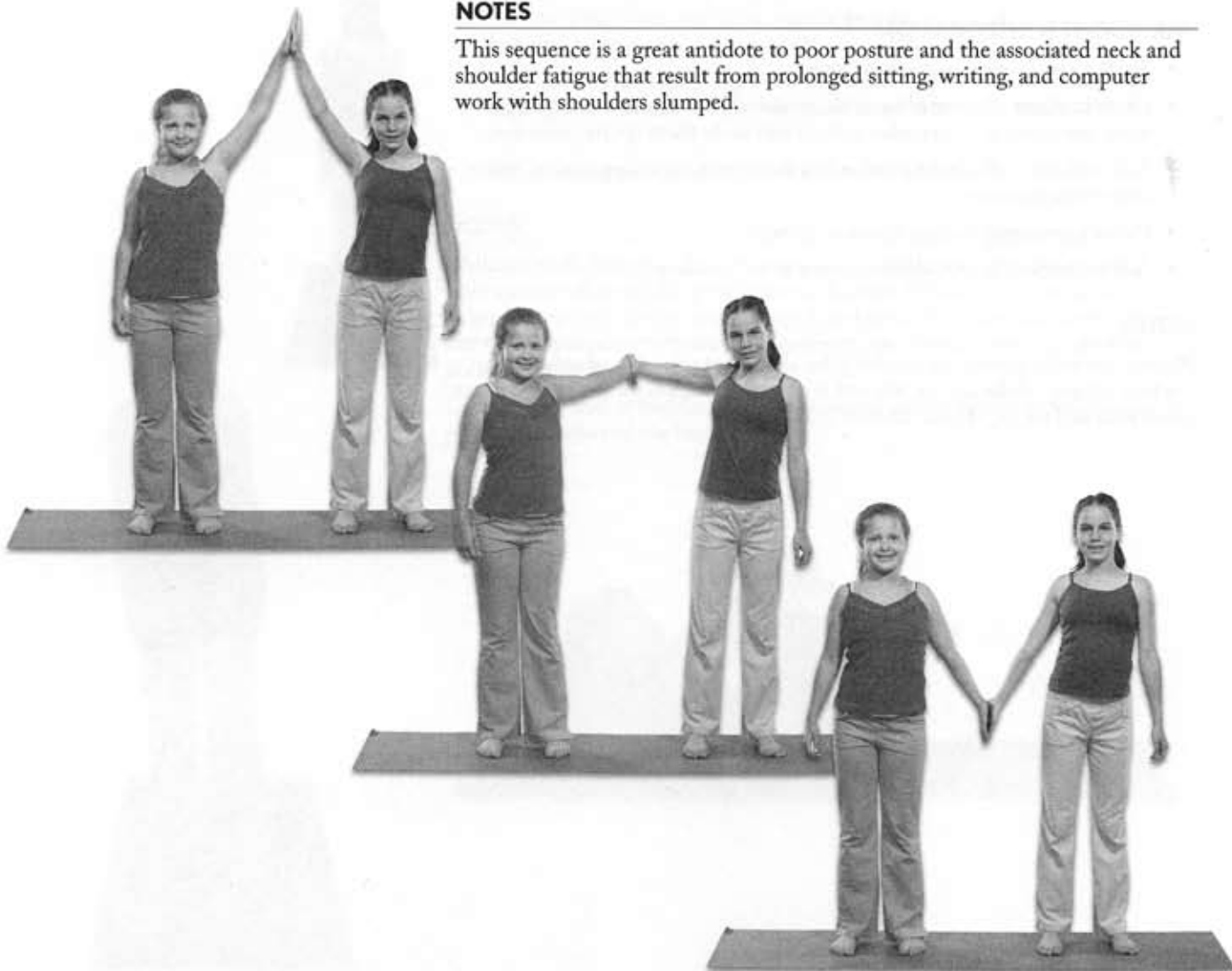
- Pair students by height and have them stand side by side, about 2 feet apart.
- Each partner lifts inside arms straight up and places palms together in twelve o'clock position.
- Breathe into upper chest and spread fingers.
- Exhale and take arms back about a foot to one o'clock position. Keep chest and top of head lifting.
- Repeat breath cycle and clocking of the arms until they are down by your sides at six o'clock.
- Switch sides.

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Use activity to teach young students the positions of the clock.

NOTES

This sequence is a great antidote to poor posture and the associated neck and shoulder fatigue that result from prolonged sitting, writing, and computer work with shoulders slumped.



SIDE ANGLE



BENEFITS

Energizes and grounds. Strengthens legs and core muscles. Stretches inner thighs and hip muscles. Excellent antidote for sitting too long.

TIME

10 seconds to 1 minute

ACTIVITY

- From standing, take legs wide apart—about 3 to 4 feet.
- Turn the left foot in slightly to the right, and the right foot all the way out to the right.
- Bend the right knee until thigh and calf form a right angle (knee over the ankle with shin straight up and down) and then lightly rest right elbow on right knee.
- Straighten the back leg and press out through feet and top of head.
- Stretch the left arm out over the left ear, palm facing down.
- Keep the head in alignment with the spine, with belly, chest, and eyes turned upward to the sky.
- Switch sides.

VARIATIONS & INTEGRATION

- Take hand from knee down to the floor by the little toe.
- Press gently on crown of head and have student “press back” in pose to engage more postural muscles.

NOTES

Pose stretches and tones the hip flexor and psoas, key muscles for posture and low back health.

