

The Great Family Circus

Extraordinary things happen together

RAINBOW YOGA | AI-CREATED SAMPLE CLASS 3 Created with AI and refined with Gopala's teaching feedback.

45 minutes | Children aged 5-10 with a grown-up | Six family pairs | A Rainbow-trained teacher with family-acro experience



A family flying act: a grown-up bases and a child opens their wings in Bird.

Step into a circus where children can direct the grown-ups, a very dignified parent can become a very ridiculous lion, and two families can invent an act that neither could make alone. Bring your laughter, your balancing feet, your strange little talents and your willingness to surprise each other.

Our journey: Extraordinary names -> scarf-conducted yoga -> family lion shows -> a first flying sequence -> two-family troupes -> one magnificent company bow -> a dream circus with extraordinary new friends.

Bring: One light scarf per person, big or small, and one generously sized hoop per family; mats for shared floor work and acro; a speaker with the music queued; optional soft juggling scarves, ribbons and a small drum. Place hoops and spare props at the edge during flying. Arrange families in a welcoming circle, with room to move in and out together.

Make room for every family: A grown-up may be a parent, grandparent, carer or another trusted adult. With siblings, give each child a flying turn while the other announces or conducts, then swap. A seated grown-up can lead scarf shapes, be a seated roaring lion and co-create the show. Where flying does not suit a pair, keep their child in the act through the grounded flight described in Activity 4.

Teaching rhythm: Demonstrate briefly and vividly, then let families practise and invent. The times include explanations, swaps and transitions. Music supports the play; bring it down whenever partners need to hear each other. Open each activity's playlist link before class; a complete music guide is also included at the back.

A longer circus for new flyers: Allow 60 minutes when families need more time to learn the acro and enjoy creating their shows. Use 4, 7, 8, 16, 10, 7 and 8 minutes for Activities 1-7. Stay with a successful first flight when that is the right next step; protect the time for the shared bow and rest.

1. Meet Our Wonderfully Unusual Troupe | 4 minutes

Music: [The Show playlist](#). Use a short grand entrance, then pause for extraordinary names.

A little circus history: "People have enjoyed acrobats, jugglers and funny performers for a very long time. In London in 1768, Philip and Patty Astley opened a riding school and gave trick-riding performances. Their shows grew to include other extraordinary performers. Different talents came together in one ring!"

Become the ringmaster: Put on a gloriously serious face. "Normal names? I'm afraid there are no jobs for normal names in THIS circus. Too boring! We need extraordinary names, extraordinary ideas and the wonderfully unusual things that make you YOU!"

Keep the invitation warm: This is a joke about our pretend circus, not a test children must pass. Everyone already belongs. An extraordinary talent might be balancing, inventing a rhyme, making a tiny squeak or helping someone else shine.

1. **Show them how.** "I am Professor Wobbleknees, the world's finest one-legged jelly!" Balance in Tree, wobble theatrically, then regain your balance. Invite your grown-up volunteer to echo your name and shape.
2. **Invent together.** Give each family 20 seconds to create one extravagant family stage name and a five-second moving greeting. Suggest The Upside-Down Pancakes, Captain Cartwheel and the Whispering Thunder, or The Magnificent Almost-Flying Pickles. Names can be invented, not just chosen from these examples.
3. **Meet the company.** Each pair announces its name and shows the greeting; the whole circle echoes the final movement. Keep all six turns short so everyone is doing, not waiting.
4. **Notice a real gift.** In pairs, each person completes: "One extraordinary thing you bring is..." It can be imagination, kindness, rhythm, strength, humour or something only their family knows.

Into the next act: "Extraordinary performers need an extraordinary conductor. This scarf can tell your body what to do without saying a word!"

History reference: [The story of circus, Victoria and Albert Museum](#).

2. The Scarf That Makes You Move | 6 minutes

Music: [Scarf Leader & Other Warm-Ups playlist](#). Keep the same playful track running through both whole-circle rounds; every person leads twice.

Invite: "One circus circle, twelve extraordinary conductors! Your scarf can invite EVERYBODY to move. First we will make shapes together; then we will let our scarves go wonderfully wild!"

Stay in one whole-group circle, each child and grown-up holding a scarf. Show how one person's scarf and body lead while the entire circle follows with their own scarves. Try the five ideas on the next page briefly together. These are starting sparks, not a routine everybody must reproduce.

The Scarf's Secret Yoga Language

1. **Curtain up: Mountain to a tall stretch.** Start with feet grounded. Lift the scarf slowly; everyone reach up. Lower it and soften the arms. Breathe in as the curtain rises and out as it falls. Repeat twice.
2. **The big-top roof: two side bends.** Carry the scarf in a slow rainbow overhead. Everyone lengthen and side bend one way, return through the middle, then travel the other way. Keep the feet rooted while the roof sways.
3. **The tightrope lookout: Warrior II.** Sweep the scarf sideways. Everyone step wide, turn one foot out and bend that knee while opening the arms. Look along the front arm. Come through the middle and change sides. Hold each lookout for two easy breaths.
4. **The disappearing magician: a soft-kneel forward fold.** Let the scarf float towards the floor. Everyone bend the knees and fold. Slowly lift the scarf again; uncurl to standing. Add a delighted face when the magician reappears.
5. **The balancing flag: Tree.** Float the scarf beside you like a flag. Everyone shift onto one foot, resting the other toes on the floor or the foot against the standing leg away from the knee. Wave a free hand to each other. Lower and change feet.

Round 1: Everybody shapes the circus. Travel around the circle, giving every child AND every grown-up a turn. The leader shapes their scarf into a tall flag, an arch, a twist, a low fold or their own idea, and shows a body shape to match. Everyone follows, holds for a breath, then turns towards the next conductor. A scarf can be a wobbly roof, a tiny mountain or a most unlikely balancing tail. Each person gets to choose.

Round 2: The wonderfully wild scarf circus! Go all the way around again. This time every participant invents ANY crazy shape AND movement they want with their scarf: a spinning spaghetti storm, a zigzagging comet, a slow-motion puddle becoming a jump, a dancing octopus or something nobody has named yet! The leader moves their body too; everybody does their best to follow. Copy the spirit, not perfect precision. Let the group laugh, improvise and find its own versions. These inventions need not have a yoga name.

Keep the turns flowing: Use about 2 minutes for the shared introduction, then 2 minutes for each round. With twelve people, allow roughly 10 seconds per turn. Call the next leader warmly so no child or adult is missed. In a larger circle, extend this activity rather than giving only a few people the fun of leading.

Let the scarf change the movement: A slow scarf invites a long stretch; a tiny circle creates a small version; a broad sweep opens a big shape. Flutter, turn, bounce, dance, change level and discover how the whole circle answers. Let the movement grow gradually so everyone can join its energy.

For different bodies: Compare the idea, not identical heights. A seated conductor can reach, side bend, turn, flutter and make a strong open-armed lookout. Everyone answers in their own version. A small hand dance can be as inventive as a whole-body whirlwind.

Into the next act: "Our whole circus can follow each other's ideas! Find your family partner. One of you has grown a magnificent mane... and the other has a hoop!"

3. The Lion And The Hoop | 6 minutes

Music: [The Show playlist](#). Choose a dramatic passage for lion entrances; lower it for the roars and trainer cues.

Invite: "Welcome to the most surprising lion show in town! Will your grown-up be the lion while YOU train them? Or will you become the lion? Both are wonderful. Your lion is a creative partner, so listen to its ideas too."



Practise your dramatic lion faces and roaring breaths together before creating a family show.

First, everybody roar! Kneel with hands on thighs, or settle on hands and knees. Spread your fingers into paws. Breathe in through the nose; open the mouth, stretch the tongue out and let a long, playful "haaa" roar ride the breath out. Let the next breath arrive normally. Practise three times: a sleepy lion, a majestic lion and a lion who has just found a sock in its breakfast. Roar with an open throat, not a strained shout.

Demonstrate with a volunteer: The trainer announces an extraordinary lion name, offers a clear hand cue and holds the hoop upright with its lower rim resting on the floor. The lion roars, crawls through, makes one wonderful yoga shape on the other side and finishes with another roar. The trainer makes a delighted face and applauds. Then the lion suggests an improvement: "Again, but this time I am a very sneaky lion!"

Build your whole lion act: Choose your roles and invent an extraordinary lion name. Begin AND finish in Lion Pose with a roaring breath. In between, let the yoga menu spark your ideas, then add your OWN poses, travels, sounds, tricks and comic surprises. Perhaps your lion refuses to leap until the trainer dances, stalks an invisible sandwich, or teaches the trainer to balance! Include a journey through or around the hoop, contrasting yoga shapes and a little story that joins them. The menu is an invitation, not a limit. Both partners help invent the complete act, rehearse it, then perform for the neighbouring family. Swap performers and audience.

Timing: 1 minute for shared roars; 1 minute for the demonstration; 2 minutes to invent and rehearse; 1 minute each for neighbouring families to present. Swap trainer and lion during rehearsal if both want a turn. They may also keep their chosen roles.

Hoop partnership: The trainer offers the hoop at a height and angle the lion can use, without moving it unexpectedly. Start with its rim on the floor. A confident lion can choose a little step-hop through a low hoop after trying the route; an adult steadies the hoop with a young trainer. Crawling dramatically can be just as impressive as jumping. Use a big enough hoop for a grown-up lion, or lay it flat as their stage and travel around it.

The Lion's Yoga Menu

Choose a few contrasting actions, rather than racing through the whole menu. Let the lion suggest a name and personality for each shape.

The suspicious lion: Cat-Cow. On hands and knees, press through the palms and round the back, looking towards the belly. Then lengthen the chest forward and gently arch. Make a round "Who goes there?" lion and an open-chested "It is I!" lion. Repeat with an easy breath in the opening and out in the rounding.



A family variation: the grown-up rounds into Cat while the little lion crawls beneath.

Two lions together: A grown-up can hold a rounded Cat while their child crawls under the arch, as pictured. Or become two cats side by side and mirror each other's rounding, stretching and curious looks. Let the trainer join the act for its final pose.

The lion with a very long tail: balancing Cat. From hands and knees, slide one leg back and reach the opposite arm forward. Keep the belly lightly engaged. Return hand and knee to the floor and change sides. Start with toes or fingertips still touching down; next, lift them and show a long, steady line.



Reach a paw and the opposite leg away from the centre for a long balancing lion.

The tail-catching lion: Tiger. From hands and knees, bend one knee so the sole faces up. Reach the opposite hand back to hold that foot if it is comfortably available. Gently press the foot into the hand to open the chest, then release slowly and change sides. The trainer can mime searching for the missing tail; the lion chooses whether to lift it or catch it.



The tail-catching variation: press the foot into the opposite hand and open the chest.

More personalities: A stretching lion walks its hands forward with hips above knees; a stalking lion takes slow Cat steps; a curious lion looks towards one hip and then the other; a resting lion sits its hips towards its heels; a grand lion rises to kneeling and opens its paws. Join two shapes through a slow crawl, turn or tail wiggle. Give every pose enough time to become visible.

Into the next act: "Your lion and trainer listened beautifully. Now your team is ready for the flying tent. Grown-ups will become our bases, and children our flyers!"

4. Our First Flying Act | 11 minutes

Music: [Acrobatics & Circus Activities playlist](#). Keep the demonstration quiet. Play softly during practice so partners can communicate.

Invite: "A base and a flyer are one team. Your first trick is learning to move as one piece, hear each other and come back together. Then we can add a royal surprise!"

Watch the instructional video: [Bird, Throne & Shins Stand - Rainbow Acro Challenge](#). Bird setup and return appear at 0:26-3:05; the linked sequence begins around 3:27. Watch before teaching and demonstrate the progression you can guide and spot confidently. The full video's later Shin Stand is an extension, not a first-flight requirement.

Organise the practice: Neighbouring families work side by side. One grown-up bases their child while the second grown-up learns to spot; then they swap families. The waiting child is the ringmaster: announces the flyer, watches for a steady shape and applauds the return. With six family pairs, this makes three practice groups. Demonstrate the base, flyer AND spotting jobs before they start.

Two-minute flight school:

1. **One piece.** On the floor, everyone makes a long prone flying shape: legs reaching back, chest gently lifted, belly engaged and arms by the sides. Breathe while staying connected through the middle. Try a floppy noodle, then an organised flying body, so the difference can be felt.
2. **Counterbalance.** Stand facing your partner and wrap your hands around each other's wrists in a comfortable reciprocal grip. Grown-ups use a wide, steady stance. Lean away only a little, bend the knees together and return. Adjust the amount of lean for the size difference; do not drag the lighter partner. Try two smooth "circus elevators".
3. **Communication.** Practise "Ready?" / "Ready" before moving and "Down" for a calm return at any time. The waiting ringmaster gives applause, not commands to jump or go faster.

The spotter's practical job: The teacher shows the adult a stable stance beside the flyer's upper body, close enough to guide the shoulders and trunk and keep the head from dropping. Support the learning as needed, move with the transition and stay engaged until the child's feet are grounded. Never lift by the head or neck. Use another competent adult or the teacher when the proposed variation needs more support; children are not assigned to catch a falling flyer.

The first flight: Keep both hands connected for the whole first lift. Use the step-by-step Bird on the next page. Give each family a controlled entry, a brief steady hold and a return before adding a transition. A flyer who enjoys a short flight may repeat that successful version.

Grounded flight: If flying is not right for a pair today, the child makes the same long prone body on the mat while the grown-up mirrors alongside. Together, open the wings, bring the hands to the floor and press back to a proud kneeling "Throne". This is their act, not a waiting task.

Timing: 2 minutes of flight school; 2 minutes of demonstration; 3 minutes of practice per family; 1 minute to repeat the chosen little sequence and clear the flying space.

Bird -> Throne -> Bird -> Home

Bird: take off together. The grown-up lies on their back. The child stands facing them, close enough that the adult can reach the child's toes. Bend the adult's knees and place parallel feet across the child's hip creases, with the balls of the feet supporting the front of the hip bones. Check the fit together. Connect palms: the child's fingers point forward and the adult's fingers turn out to the sides, as shown in the video.

Say "Ready?" The child leans forward as one organised piece while the adult first receives the weight, then extends the legs to bring the child above their hips. Both press steadily through connected hands with long arms. The adult's ankles, knees and hips line up; keep joints supported without forcing them past straight. The child reaches back through the legs and looks forward with an open chest. Keep ordinary breathing.

First return: Keep the hand connection. The adult bends their knees slowly, bringing the child's feet back to the floor. Release only once the child is standing. Practise this return before staying up to do more.



Bird with open wings is a later balance: begin with hands connected and adult spotting.

Add the royal seat when Bird and its return are steady: Reconnect hands if wings were opened. Press into the palms with long arms. The child brings one leg forward as the adult changes that foot's support from the hip crease to underneath the child's upper thigh. Repeat on the other side. The child's feet meet and press against the adult's shins, and the child sits tall in Throne. The adult keeps the supporting legs stacked. The spotter follows the child's trunk through the changing shape. Demonstrate this weight transfer before families try it.

Fly home: From Throne, bring joined hands between the child's knees. Press through long arms. The child sends one leg back while the adult returns that foot to the hip crease, then repeat on the other side to regain Bird. Pause, breathe, then use the practised feet-to-floor return. The little routine is a complete act even without releasing hands.

Next challenge: Ready pairs may open their Bird wings after the teacher checks their balance, then reconnect before moving on. Experienced pairs can work with the teacher on the video's Throne-to-Shin-Stand addition, with suitable adult support. Learn its separate setup and return first; do not add height just because the music becomes exciting.

Into the next act: "You have a flying act. Your neighbours have ideas and talents you don't have yet. What happens when two families become one extraordinary troupe?"

5. Invent Our Impossible Act | 7 minutes

Music: [The Show playlist](#). Let each troupe choose a rehearsed excerpt; pause for announcements.

Invite: "Two families, one troupe! Put your talents together. Make something funny, surprising and beautiful that none of you could make alone."

Form three troupes of two families. Give each troupe its scarves, a hoop and optional soft props. Each person offers one talent in a quick round: a dance step, a beat, a funny voice, a rhyme, a balance, a juggling toss, an expressive face or a brilliant idea. A grown-up's dramatic slow-motion sneeze is a perfectly respectable circus talent.

Build a 30-second act with three parts:

1. **Make an entrance.** Announce a troupe name. Enter in a shared yoga shape or repeat one person's funny movement. Establish a small story: The Lion Who Wanted To Fly, The Royal Seat That Ordered Pizza, or The Scarf That Stole The Circus.
2. **Combine your talents.** Weave at least one practised yoga or acro phrase with another contribution. A Bird can be announced by an operatic clown; two mirrored Warrior lookouts can watch a scarf-juggling comet; a lion can crawl through the hoop while a narrator whispers a completely overdramatic sports commentary. Keep the roles moving so everyone helps make the act, rather than one star doing everything.
3. **Create one surprise.** Change the rhythm, reverse who leads, add a comic pause or let a scarf become a wildly unlikely character. Finish with a connected still shape for two breaths. Save your enormous bow for the next activity.

Take it a level up: Families may decorate the acro they have practised with a character, an entrance, a rhythm or a coordinated second performer. A troupe ready to explore a higher version calls the teacher over to choose, demonstrate and support that specific next step. The adult spotter stays fully available during flying; juggling, drumming and clowning belong to another person or happen after the flyer lands. Only one child flies at a time where there is one available adult spotter.

Rehearse and improve: Run it once. Ask each person, "What would make OUR act even better?" Pick one change and rehearse again. Keep the invention teachable: agree how you begin, who gives each cue and exactly how any shared balance returns to the floor.

Timing: 1 minute to pool talents; 3 minutes to create; 1 minute to rehearse and improve; 2 minutes for three short shows and generous applause. While watching, every audience member notices one contribution they loved.

Into the next act: "Magnificent! But a troupe this extraordinary cannot finish with an ordinary bow. We need a bow the world has never seen!"

6. The Most Extraordinary Bow Ever | 5 minutes

Music: [The Show playlist](#). Repeat a grand finale passage for troupe bows and the whole-company bow.

Invite: "This is not four separate people bowing. It is ONE bow your whole troupe invents together. I am preparing my standing ovation!"

Make a little bowing yoga sequence: Stand in a row holding hands, or arrange a connected seated-and-standing row that works for your troupe. Each person suggests one movement. Try the ideas, then choose three or four that join smoothly. Everyone should influence the bow, not simply copy the loudest idea.

A starting example, not the required answer:

1. **The rising curtain:** In Mountain, lift joined hands to a comfortable height and look towards your imaginary audience. Take a shared breath in.
2. **The royal bow:** Soften the knees and hinge forwards together, letting joined hands travel down without pulling a neighbour. Breathe out. A seated performer can bow from the hips.
3. **The travelling applause:** Rise. Pass a small side bend or shoulder ripple from one end of the line to the other; each person carries it onwards like a wave of thank-yous.
4. **The impossible final signature:** Choose a connected Tree row, a low Chair row, a wide-legged star shape or your own surprising family shape. Hold for two easy breaths, then return together. Keep any shared handhold comfortable across different heights.

Make it yours: Could your bow happen in slow motion? Could it begin at one end and return from the other? Could an enormous bow turn into a tiny bow, followed by a final reach to the stars? Combine actual yoga shapes with comic timing. A dramatic face can be magnificent without adding another lift.

From troupes to the whole company: Give the troupes 2 minutes to invent and rehearse. Each troupe shows its short bow; applaud with a genuine standing ovation. Then invite the three troupes to join into one long curved row. Keep hands connected and borrow one movement from each troupe. Guide the three movements into a shared company sequence, repeat it once and finish with a huge "Ta-da!"

Timing: 2 minutes to invent; 1 minute for troupe bows; 2 minutes to connect the whole company and repeat its final bow. A hand-to-forearm connection can bridge different heights; relax and reconnect the hold whenever the chosen transition needs it.

Into the next act: "The audience has gone home. Our circus has one more performance tonight, but this one happens behind our eyelids..."

7. The Dream Circus Welcomes New Friends | 6 minutes

Music: [Flight Maintenance Thai Massage playlist](#). Play softly while settling, then fade beneath the story and leave the final minute quiet.

Settle together: Rest comfortably beside your family, perhaps holding hands or leaning into a familiar shoulder. Let the floor carry you. Eyes can close or rest on one quiet place. This is an imaginary adventure; the bodies can stay at rest while the circus travels.

Read slowly. Leave about 10 seconds at each pause, then a longer quiet rest at the end.

"The big top has become very quiet. You can feel the place beneath you, holding all your weight. A little lantern glows at the entrance. Someone is waiting there.

It is a unicorn wearing mismatched socks. 'May I join your troupe?' they ask. 'I can balance a moonbeam on my horn, but I have never made a show with friends.' You make a space. What extraordinary name will your troupe give its new friend? [Pause]

Together you invent a moonbeam tightrope. The unicorn makes the light; someone in your troupe gives it music; someone else invents a wonderful way to cross. Perhaps you travel sideways, upside down or as gently as a feather. The unicorn tries your idea. What happens when your talents meet? [Pause]

A small dragon peeps around the curtain. Every time it gets excited, it sneezes a cloud of coloured bubbles. 'I keep forgetting my big moment,' it says. Your troupe invents a friendly signal: a tiny wave, a shared breath, a tap of the drum. The dragon notices. A fountain of bubbles floats through the tent exactly when you all hoped it would. What is inside the biggest bubble? [Pause]

Now a mermaid arrives in a travelling pool shaped like a teacup. Her voice can make water dance. She wants an act with the unicorn, the dragon AND your whole troupe. You listen to everyone's ideas. Moonlight arches above the water, bubbles carry the music, and your own extraordinary talent changes the show in a way nobody expected. Imagine that new act. Give it room to surprise you. [Pause]

The performance ends with a bow you invent together. Nobody could have made this circus alone. The unicorn curls up beside the curtains. The dragon's last bubble lands without a sound. The mermaid's water becomes still.

You do not need to invent anything else now. Feel the real floor beneath you. Let your hands soften. Let your face soften. Let the circus rest."

Leave about 60-90 seconds of quiet. Then invite a natural stretch, a roll to one side and an unhurried return to sitting. In the family circle, share one word, a gesture or a squeeze that says, "I loved making something with you."

Take the circus home: Ask your family to invent one new connected bow tonight. A living room can hold an extraordinary amount of imagination.

Music For The Great Family Circus

Open the playlists before class. Listen through your chosen tracks, queue the passages you want and turn off shuffle. Preview lyrics, volume changes and any adverts for your group. Links open in Spotify; account access and availability can vary.

Let music serve the connection: Lower or pause it for demonstrations, conversation and shared acro. Repeat a passage when an activity needs longer; finish the movement together rather than rushing to a musical cue.

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[The Show playlist](#). Use a short grand entrance, then pause for extraordinary names.

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[Scarf Leader & Other Warm-Ups playlist](#). Keep the same playful track running through both whole-circle rounds; every person leads twice.

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