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What is yoga?

1 Not long ago, most people would give you funny looks if you said you practiced yoga. They thought it was a strange cult of people standing on their heads. Today, though, people are learning yoga everywhere. In some schools it is even taught in gym class.

2 While yoga may be new to most people in the United States, it is more than 5,000 years old. It comes from India, where the word *yoga* means “join together” in the ancient *sanskrit* language. While yoga has been tied to the Hindu religion, today it is practiced by people of any beliefs.

3 Practicing yoga usually involves a system of physical and mental exercises. These exercises are meant to bring the mind and body closer to each other. Through yoga, people learn more about what is going on in their bodies. For instance, smokers can feel what smoke is doing to their lungs. At the same time, making the body more flexible helps to clear the mind.

4 The three main parts of a yoga practice involve exercise, meditation, and breathing. The exercise part involves many different *asanas*, or poses, with names like “downward facing dog” and “full lotus.” There are also head-stands that help to make the body stronger and more flexible. Meditation involves sitting quietly to clear the mind. The “breathing” part sounds very easy to most people. In yoga, however, people learn to control their breath, which can take a lot of work.

5 There are more than 100 different kinds of yoga. Some are very different from what is described here.



Circle the correct answer for questions 1–5.

Write your answer to question 6 on a separate piece of paper.



1. The article does *not* tell _____.
A why people meditate
B where yoga comes from
C what the word *yoga* means
D what the most popular form of yoga is

2. Which word in paragraph 1 means “small religious group”?
A gym
B cult
C yoga
D schools

3. Which paragraph tells how old yoga is?
A 1
B 2
C 3
D 4

4. What is *not* one of the positive effects of practicing yoga?
A It teaches people what is going on in their bodies.
B It makes the body stronger and more flexible.
C It helps to clear the mind.
D It builds muscle mass.

5. You can conclude from the article that _____.
A yoga started in the United States
B yoga is only practiced by Hindus
C yoga can help people be healthier
D yoga never involves standing on your head

6. Many people do yoga for “peace of mind.” What do you like to do when you want to clear your thoughts? Describe the process you go through.