

Sample Manual 3. Copyright Rose Li School.

The Main Characteristics of Hsing-i

Simple and clear

The basic movements of Hsing-i are simple and clear seemingly putting stress on the straight motion of hands and feet. To the uneducated viewer, this may seem the case with movement across a room either in straight lines or zigzags. To the educated viewer, you can see the practical workings of the three characteristics of Nei Chia: reverse breathing, stretching five ends and spiral motion. Again, I would say it's not *what* you do that's important, but *how* you do it. Moving internally is simple but takes years of practice to undertake properly.

Compact and well organised

- Practicing Hsing-i gives you the outward appearance of compactness in that your limbs and trunk coordinate together; the whole body moves as one unit:
- Arms brush the body - the 'tool' to use to open and close/expand and contract.
- Arms rotate/torque to initiate spiral motion
- Release of strength is oppositional throughout the whole of the body
- Feeling is of torsion around the central line

Steady and composed

Hsing-i is characterised by firm, strong stances.

- On exhaling, feet are pressed into the ground, toes are gripped. On changing weight distribution, legs

are lifted by inhalation using reverse breathing with the grounded foot pressing into the floor, toes gripping. Movement is therefore performed with a 'push-pull' action.

- Shoulders and elbows are dropped. This is the only way strength can be transferred from the lower Tan T'ien to the hands. Externally, any extraneous movement of the shoulders (usually on an inhalation) will telegraph your movement to an opponent.
- The mind is steadied by defocusing your eyes upon the target
- Two important elements in actual fighting are often ignored but stressed in Hsing-i: tempo and ground.

- Tempo

What is most surprising in a real fight is the rapidity that you tire. This is because the tempo or rhythm of this activity is broken as soon as you begin fighting. Shadow boxing, bag work and sparring can all help sharpen your skills but ultimately, in a class environment, it is incumbent on the teacher to provide a broken tempo count for the forms. Practicing to music is the last thing you want to do as you'll end up being predicable as you punch to 4:4 time.

- Grounding

The world is not composed of flat canvas rings nor polished, sprung wooded floors. If force is mainly derived from the ground then you'd better have a good root. Hsing I therefore stresses pushing both feet into the ground and gripping the toes.

Harmonious and integrated

Integration of strength and movement come only with practice. Strength comes from the release of breath from the lower Tan T'ien; this opens the lower back at the level of the kidneys. Within the system taught at our School, form is determined by core principles and realising that the target you are striking has the same dimensions as your own body. The shape of your form, therefore, can easily be determined from deciding where you are going to strike, rather than using your own body as a template e.g. the tip of the middle finger lines up with your nose in Pi Chuan. Body movement integration comes not from striking by the moving of your body from a neutral stance to one that has approximately a 70:30 weight distribution (with the majority of the weight over the front foot), but rather moving the whole body forward as one unit.

Attack and defence features in Hsing-i

I've already discussed the principle of attack and defence are one within the context of Nei Chia. Within our system, we have simple statements that summarise in a succinct way the various key elements within Nei Jia. Of these, one of them is that 'Hsing-i has no blocks'. This statement mirrors Dempsey in that it's better to attack than evade, it's better to evade than to deflect, and it's better to deflect than block. The mental attitude within the practice of Hsing-i is paramount. When you expand, you expand with your body, your soul with everything and with total objectivity. Similarly when you contract. This has bred repeated statements such as "when you practice, think of fighting, when you fight think of your teacher", "strike as if walking, look upon your opponent just as weeds". Every part of your body is

working harmoniously and in concert so that the whole body strikes - hence the phrase "the whole body is a fist"¹

¹ There's a fantastic Miss Li story about Teng Yun Feng. One day he was sitting down, smoking his pipe and observing a Hsing I class. Standing next to Teng was a senior student. Teng suddenly sneezed and the student went flying! What power! What Chi! Teng later confessed to Miss Li that as he sneezed he'd automatically stretched five ends and an elbow, unseen by any observers, had struck the senior student. The moral here I think is that there's always be *some* truth in those shaggy dog stories!