

Tai Chi Beginning Form 1

Stage [1] Beginner

[1.1] Key Theoretical Elements

Student needs to remember 3 Characteristics: Reverse breathing, Stretch 5 ends and Spiral Motion

Student learning format: first broad brush strokes and then fill in gaps: don't try to learn all of it in one go

[1.2] Objectives:

- Just get the basic movements sort of correct
- Try to remember the form without prompting
- Try to get coordination of body movement with movement of the hands

[1.3] Details

- Feet are turned out at around 45 degrees - not parallel as you're going to move forward in move 3 (Heng) so left foot will become rear foot
- Feet must not be turned out too much as this will impede force transfer from legs pushing into ground up spine
- Better to err on feet turned in a little too much as this allows spine to stretch on exhalation part of cycle
- Hands don't go higher than the shoulders; this means shoulders do not inadvertently rise: External => raised shoulders get picked up on inhalation and you'll get hit. Internal: breath can't work properly if shoulders raised
- Don't allow elbows/arms to chicken wing: keep elbows down
- Body mass delivers force: Body comes up => hands come up; your body moves then the hands move: force delivery by mass of body means that body doesn't go down when hands come up Re: Dempsey
- Remember it's rate of change of motion - the ability to accelerate/decelerate that's important rather than pure speed
- Simultaneity: Hands and body must end their movement simultaneously => hands move faster than body
- Breathing: reverse breathing if possible; breath in as you go up and out when you go down as strike is at the end of the downward movement

Stage [2] Intermediate

[2.1] Key Theoretical Elements

Introduction to student's practice of the 3 Characteristics

Introduction of concept of Li-Chi-Yi

[2.2] Objectives:

- Application of full reverse breathing
- Determination of location of 5 ends
- Instigation of gripping of toes
- Instigation of opening closing inguinal arch; physical application of expansion/contraction cycle
- Start of using breath to link the body and intention

[2.3] Details

At this stage the student moves from just doing the form to allowing the breathing to move into the ends of the body and the sense of the motion of the Tan T'ien and anal sphincter lock to instigate movement.

Student analyses location of ends and begins to feel how breath stretches into these ends

Beginning of investigation of force generation mechanism:

- Inguinal arch and arm pit opening, opposition of forces emphasis with this form on the vertical elongation/contraction process (head and base of spine)
- At culmination of exhalation, head stretches up in opposition to base of spine going down
- At culmination of exhalation, hands press down
- Spiral motion development within leg and arm movement
- Implications for joint mobility re: spiral motion
- Opening of thorax and how arm location in space determines this
- Engagement of latts as part of force generation mechanism
- San Guan
- You MUST be clear where ends of body are

Stage [3] Advanced

[3.1] Key Theoretical Elements

All key theoretical elements should now be in place

[3.2] Objectives:

- Instigation of intention to drive movement; expansion and contraction of Yi
- Full application of 3 Characteristics

[3.3] Details

Full application of elements investigated in the intermediate stage:

- Expansion and contraction in all directions both physically and with intention
- Full development of spiral motion
- Full development of use of breath to move the body