



Tai Chi Chuan

1. Introduction to Tai Chi Chuan

Tai Chi Chuan is a kind of martial art that "adapts the principles of Tai Chi and turns them into martial art theories". At the beginning, it was called "Long Boxing", "Silk Boxing", "13 Postures" or "Soft Boxing". There are different explanations for the origin of Tai Chi Chuan. One view holds that Tai Chi Chuan was created by Chen Wang-ting, who lived in Chenjiagou, Wenxian County between the end of the Ming and the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. He combined 32 Postures Long Boxing (learned from Qi Chang-qaung) with Ancient Guidance, Tu Na (Breathing Methods), Chinese Meridian, Yin Yang Theory to compose the Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan. Based on the Chen Style Tai Chi, descendants (Yang Lu-chan, Yang Cheng-fu, Wu Jian-chuan, Wu Yu-xiang, Sun Lu-tang) composed the different styles of Tai Chi Chuan (Yeung Style, Wu Style, Wu Style, and Sun Style). Currently, these are the most popular styles.

According to the research of Taiwanese Professor Deng Shi-hai, no one really knows the origin of Tai Chi Chuan. In the later years of Qianlong, Wang Zong-yue arrived in Chenjiagou, theorized Tai Chi Chuan, and transformed the 13 Postures of Chen Cannon Boxing into Tai Chi Chuan. This led to the beginning of a new era in Tai Chi Chuan. Since then, the Tai Chi Chuan before Wang Zong-yue had completely disappeared. Wang wrote "*Theories of Tai Chi Chuan*", and was the first to use the term "Tai Chi Chuan". He is the real master of this form of martial arts.

After the founding of New China, in the 1950s onwards, in order to promote and popularize Tai Chi Chuan, books on the 24 Styles of simplified Tai Chi Chuan, and the 48 Styles of Tai Chi Chuan were published. A variety of Tai Chi Chuan competitions was also held. The main features of Tai Chi Chuan are: movements are slow, gentle, and continuous; one posture follows another; the upper body is kept upright and relaxed, arms are held in an arc shape; feet are sometimes in the mid-air, sometimes on the ground; each movement synchronizes with the thinking in the mind.

2. Characteristics of Tai Chi Chuan Movements

1) Relax the Body & Calm the Mind

"Relax the Body" means: while you practice Tai Chi Chuan, while maintaining the basic postures, the somatic muscles should be in a natural relaxed state; every movement is relaxed and not forced. When exercising, legs are often half bent, and muscles need to exert their strength. When you alternate the left and then the right leg to support your body weight, the leg that does not support the weight remains relaxed. "Calm the Mind" means to eliminate all distractions and maintain concentration.

2) Slow and Gentle

In general, a set of Tai Chi Chuan requires 5 to 10 minutes to complete. "Slowness" consists also of continuity. No pause is allowed between any two postures. To remain "gentle and supple", one needs to remain relaxed. For this reason, both arms should be kept in an arc shape while you exercise.

3) Coordination between Movement, Breathing, and Mind

When you have practiced Tai Chi for a while, and have attained a certain level, you will have to learn to synchronize movement, breathing and mind. Then you can express the characteristics of Tai Chi, and achieve better training effect.

- (1) The synchronization between "Movement" and "Breathing" - Tai Chi Chuan technique is composed of "Up", "Down", "Open", and "Close" movements. Usually, when you move upwards ("Up"), you inhale; when you move downwards ("Down"), you exhale. When you open your arms ("Open"), you inhale; when you close your arms ("Close"), you exhale. Another way of breathing is to inhale when a movement is completed, and to exhale when a movement is in progress. In all cases, all breathing should be natural.
- (2) The coordination between "Movement" and "Mind" - you must first eliminate distractions when practicing Tai Chi Chuan. Be consciously aware of each posture in the process. Your consciousness should guide your movements. Let the mind lead, and the body follow.

3. Principles of Tai Chi Chuan Fitness

1) Tai Chi Chuan postures are good for blood circulation

Tai Chi Chuan postures require all parts of the body to maintain a certain arc or circle. This allows the body to be in a relaxed state. Stretching and relaxing postures enable the movements to be more rhythmic; this facilitates blood circulation; prevents partial compression that might lead to the shortage of oxygen of organs; and ensures that the body remains lively and energetic.

2) Tai Chi Chuan skills are good for metabolism

The main technical characteristic of Tai Chi Chuan is its moderateness. This allows the body metabolism to be kept in a suitable state. Whether the body is supplying energy or emitting metabolites, it is done in an orderly manner. As your Tai Chi Chuan technique improves, you will consume less energy. Nevertheless, as Tai Chi Chuan is a combination of gentleness and forcefulness, and as it requires you to make use of "internal air" and "internal forces", the energy consumption remains constant in general. When one reaches a certain skill level, the level of energy consumption will be increased slightly. Overall, Tai Chi Chuan is able to enhance cardiovascular function, and is one of the best fitness programs.

3) Tai Chi Chuan consciousness is good for the health of the central nervous system

Tai Chi Chuan emphasizes the synchronization of mind and movement. The degree of synchronization reflects the level of synchrony in the central nervous system. The different states of Tai Chi Chuan -- "Loose", "Quiet", and "Natural" -- facilitate the transformation of "Yin Yang", "Xu Shi", and "Jin Tui ". This is good for the central nervous system. Practicing Tai Chi Chuan regularly for a long period of time will be beneficial to the central nervous

system – it will function more naturally and effectively. Practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan will feel comfortable, refreshed, and contented.

4. Tai Chi Gong Cao (Basic Skills)

Shu Jie (Rou Xi, Ya Tui, Bai Wei, Pan Zu, Kai He, Hou Qiao, Yao Tou, Ce Ju, Song Jian, Shuan Yao), Tao Tui, Zhuan Yao, Rou Kua, Ti Jiao, Dou Shou, Tiao Xi.

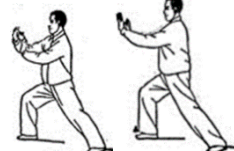
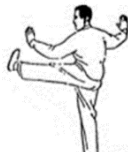
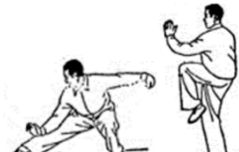
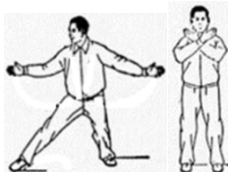
5. Rules of Tai Chi Chuan Movement

- 1) Arms (hands): include the shapes of both hands and the arms, as well the expressive style of the hand movements.
- 2) Gaze (eyes): the direction(s) the eyes focus on, as well as the expression of the face.
- 3) Waist (body): the vertical and horizontal axes of body as it turns.
- 4) Steps (feet): include pace (its shape, length, and width) and stake (ankle, knee, and hip) – these constitute the movements of the legs and the height of the body position.

6. Requirements of the Tai Chi Chuan Posture

- 1) Head: the head must be turned up in a natural manner, the chin is slightly turned down, the neck muscles are relaxed. Depending on the requirements of different movements, the head rotates differently, following the longitudinal axis. It should not be bent forward or backward, or skewed to the left or the right. The face should be relaxed, the mouth slightly closed, the tongue gently touching the palate. Breathe through the nose.
- 2) Upper Limbs: require "Chen Jian Chui Zhou" & "Shu Zhi Ta Wan". "Chen Jian Chui Zhou" -- when you practice, your shoulders should be relaxed and slightly sunk, you should extend your shoulders outwards consciously, your elbows should be slightly drooped, but not turned outwards. Arms should be kept in a curved position; they should not be overly curved or too straight. When you push your palms forward, they should be pushed naturally; the wrists should be slightly drooped.
- 3) Body: requires "Shang Ti Zheng Zhi" (the upper part of the body should be straight). Use the waist as axis as you move your arms. The chest should be "Han Xiong Yuan Bei". "Han Xiong" means you should not protrude your chest when practicing Tai Chi Chuan, neither should you bend your shoulders forwards so that your chest would sink. What is needed is to keep a straight posture in a natural way. "Yuan Bei " means to relax the muscles of the chest as well as those of the back; also, pull your shoulders out, so that the back resembles an arc. Loosen your waist, do not bend your upper body forward or backward, or to the left or to the right. The movements of the arms should follow the rotation of the waist.
- 4) Lower Limbs: require "Xu Shi Fen Ming" and "Jin Tui Qing Ling". This means to lift the feet lightly off the ground, to go forward with the heel, and to go backward with the forefoot. Whether forward and backward, make sure the foot touches the ground first, then move the central weight of the body in that direction. It is important to maintain the stability and suppleness of the body movements.

7. The Basic Pictures for 24 Styles of Simplified Tai Chi Chuan

				
1) Commencing Form	2) Left/Right Wild Horse Mane	3) White Crane Spreads Its Wings	4) Left/Right Brush Knee and Twist Step	
				
5) Hand Strums The Lute	6) Step Back To Drive Monkey	7) Left Grasp The Bird's Tail	8) Right Grasp The Bird's Tail	
				
9) Single Whip	10) Wave Hands Like Clouds	11) Single Whip	12) High Pat On Horse	13) Right Kick
				
14) Strike With Both Fist	15) Turn And Left Kick	16) Left Squat Down And Stand On One Leg	17) Right Squat Down And Stand On One Leg	
				
18) Left/ Right Fair Lady Works Shuttles	19) Needle At Sea Bottom	20) Fan Penetrates Back	21) Turn, Deflect Downward, Parry and Punch	
				
22) Withdrew and Push	23) Cross Hands	24) Closing Form		

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