



Introduction to Tai Chi Chuan

Thank you for enquiring about the introductory course in Tai Chi Chuan (pro. Tie Chee Chew-an). Outlined below is a brief overview of the class structure and its main components.

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi means, supreme ultimate, supreme ultimate simply is an expression that describes the two basic forces that underpin Chinese thought and philosophy, Yin Yang. It is part of the Chinese internal school of martial arts that co-ordinates mind and body thought the cultivation of a concept we call Chi.

Tai Chi is a singularly unique oriental exercise system. It brings together aspects of meditation oriental healing, dynamic movement, self-defence and stress management.

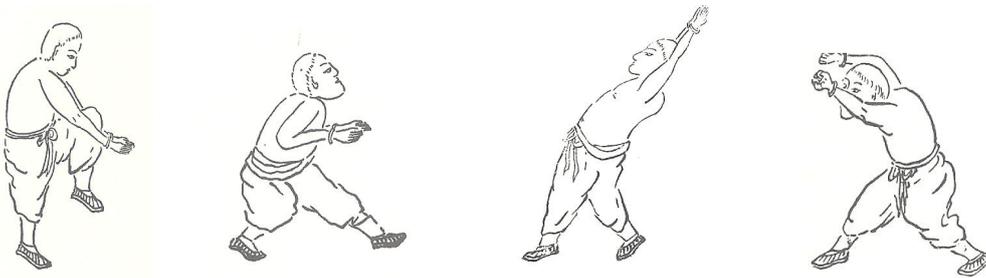
Tai Chi is not a hybrid or contrived synthesis of the above disciplines but embraces those qualities in its own right. And though all the styles of Tai Chi now are but a few hundred years old, they can trace their ancestry and origins back thousands of years and is considered a treasured Chinese national art.

Tai Chi is a multi-layered system allowing each individual to work at their own pace and requirements so can be of benefit for people returning to fitness after an illness or have not exercised for some time and feel a need to become fitter. Tai Chi's slow simple rhythmical movements are at the heart of the system but that does not belay the fact that it can still be challenging for even the fittest of people.

For those who want more than just physical exercise, Tai Chi involves and develops the ideas of practical core balance, stability and clear integration of mind, body, and spirit. This can in time create a happier more self confidence person with enhanced inner strength.

Tai Chi starts with whatever quality you bring to the class, improving and strengthening it at a fundamental level.

So Tai Chi offers something for every individual whatever your ability whether you are looking to improve your stamina, increase your strength, develop your balance, or refine and strengthen mental focus or physical stability.



Examples of Tai Chi like movement from a sixteenth century manuscript

Basic class practices

Chi Kung

This refers to building the fundamental energy for the body. It is the foundations of the system. Chi has no singular definition in western language it can mean the breath or to breathe while Kung means to develop skill, so one definition of Chi Kung means breathing skill.

The practice of Chi Kung refers to a process of guiding the body's intrinsic energy information through out the system. This is done using a series of static and/or moving body postures.

Chi Kung is a fundamental requirement and is at the heart of all Tai Chi practice.

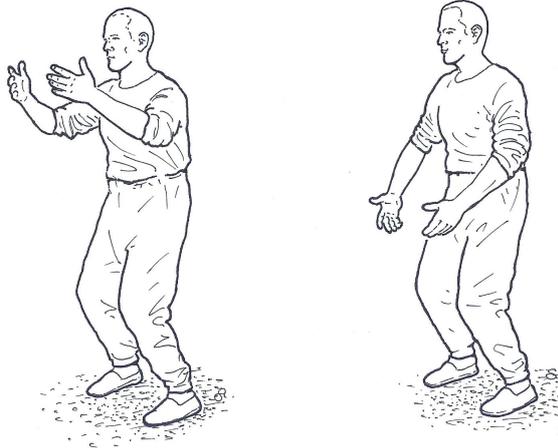
Chi Kung has the positive effect of rebalancing the support structures of the body (muscles, tendons and joints) ridding the body of the effects of negative stress that we hold subconsciously in our body, so that with regular practice it increases strength improves posture and aids stability and balance.

Chi Kung's meditative quality also enhance and strengthens ones mental focus, it relaxes and improves breathing which helps to support ones general well being.

Finally Chi Kung also has a salutary affect on the body's immune and nervous systems aiding a more robust health.

To stand still settles the mind
A settled mind creates tranquillity,
From a sense of tranquillity we obtain a sense of security
From a place of security we can think clearly
From clear thinking we can accomplish anything

Ch Kung proverb



Second and third Chi Kung postures

Core movement patterns

There are many basic movements that we practice as part of the Tai Chi, "warm ups" these exercises, though relatively simple to perform are not stretches per se, though they do bend, twist and turn the body, stretching the sinews, and relaxing and loosening the joints, in ways that prepare the body for the movements of the Tai Chi form.

Every joint in Tai Chi has to be naturally expanded, whereas conventional exercise focuses on the muscles, Tai Chi's focus is to direct movement through the joints and develop the body's natural support structure.

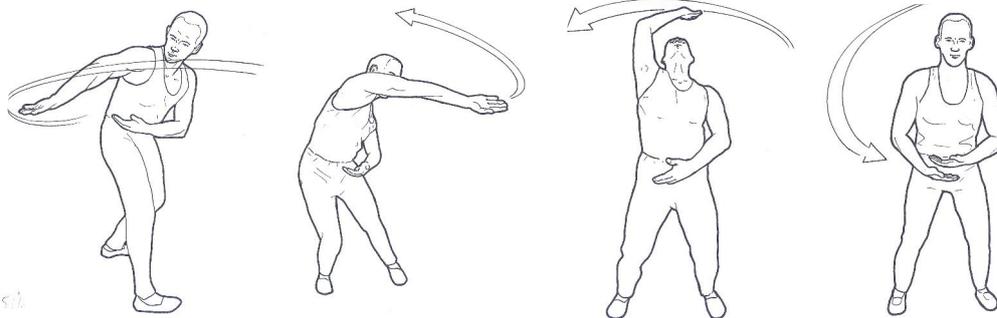
Tai Chi aims to keep the Chi moving in much the same way as a river moves. Indeed Tai Chi derives a lot of its ideas from mirroring nature. A slow steady river is teeming with life. A fast flowing river has no time for life. A stagnant river is unable to nurture life.

Rapid moment or fast jerky movements of Tai Chi is like the fast flowing river, whilst forced tension or too strong physical movement can create blockage similar to the stagnant river.

We practice twelve basic core patterns of movement as a warm up to the main Tai Chi practice; these patterns of movement bring together awareness of simple Tai Chi body movements and regular practice can greatly aid in the understanding of correct body movement for Tai Chi.

Be still as a mountain, move like a great river

Tai Chi maxim



Movements from fourth core exercise dragon plays with a

pearl

1. **White crane raises leg** – general balance, Postures like-Golden rooster, white crane spreads wings.
2. **Roc scatters the mist**- Any turning movements and weight shifting.
3. **Phoenix rises**– General spine Torso and Kua (Hip), general flexibility.
4. **Dragon plays with pearl**- Twists and spirals of upper body connectivity.
5. **Tiger turns its head** – Turns before single whip and appear to retreat, Cloud hands. Sinking energy waist and leg strengthening.
6. **Bouncing a ball** – Raising up and sinking prior to kicks whole body connectivity, chi releasing.
7. **Right and left kicking** – Tai Chi kicks flexibility in hamstrings and spine.
8. **Side right and left kicking**, - Kicks, aids hip flexibility, for basic and advanced stances.
9. **Rotate the ankles** – steps relaxation balance, Flexibility for toe/heel postures.
10. **Gentle breeze shakes the willow** – general loosening, letting go, rebalancing of chi.
11. **Left and right windlass** – flexibility relaxation of shoulders, White crane spreads wings, single whip.
12. **Circling eagle searches for food** -. Focus gaze general, turns and stability of head.

Tai Chi movement

The main part of the class is given to the correct practice of the solo form these movements are the archetypal images one thinks of as Tai Chi; a person moving in an endless rhythm, harmonised with the stillness of the early morning.

Though Tai Chi looks gentle elegant easy and relaxing, the sequences of the form take time to learn.

In the early stages we will teach the Short form of eighteen postures. Note when the term posture is used it refers to a group or sequence of movements, a typical Tai Chi posture may only have one or two movements in it, or it can have as many as five six or more.

At a later stage the traditional form can be learnt which has a hundred and eight postures

Within the system of Tai Chi we also develop two-person work. This starts off as helping each other to experience the movements and integrate the right feeling and correct alignments. This can develop into more formal two-person exercises; which can amplify ones understanding of the mental and emotional states that are active in maintaining balance and introduce the fundamentals of self-defence applications.

Tai Chi the self-defence is not always fully understood and at first seems at odds with the relaxed almost meditative practice that Tai Chi is generally pursued for. Yet self-defence is seen as one of the highest aspect of the art, this does not mean than one has to practice it, nor is it taught in a competitive or violent way. Each movement in Tai Chi has a practical application related to its self-defence aspect. Not to understand or ignore this aspect is a practice fundamentally out of balance.

"But Da But Gau" or "not to hit is not to teach"

Grand master Ip Tai Tak

This means simply that unless the teacher gives you hands on approach to learning. Without the ability to feel the structure and postural integrity including chi you can never fully appreciate nor deepen your own development of Tai Chi.

Names of postures

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Commencement | 10. White crane spreads wings |
| 2. Grasp birds tail | 11. Brush knee push |
| 3. Push left & right | 12. Parting wild horses mane |
| 4. Single whip | 13. Separate & kick right |
| 5. Fist under elbow | 14. Separate & kick left |
| 6. Back stepping monkey | 15. Brush the knee |
| 7. Diagonal flying | 16. Deflect parry & push |
| 8. Lift hands | 17. Step up parry punch |
| 9. Ward off right | 18. Appear to close |

Settling the Breath

This is a simple breathing exercise composed of three movements. Its aim is to settle the breathing and regulate the breath and movement in order to develop both stillness and drawing the energy back to the lower centre point what in Tai Chi is called the Tan tien.

*A healthy person breathes from the abdomen
A sick person breathes from the chest
A dying person breathes from the throat
Whilst a sage breathe from his heels*

Chi Kung proverb

Tai Chi is a rich fascinating art that is said to create, the robust health of a lumberjack the pliability of a child and the peace of a sage. I hope this document has given you some insight into the practice of this ancient and fascinating art.



For further details or queries of any kind please email me at bryan.nuttall@mypostoffice.co.uk or for information about classes Tel: 01772 252611

Bryan nuttall is an instructor with the John Ding International Academy of Tai Chi Chuan. Bryan has been practising and teaching Chinese Chi Kung health exercises, meditation and martial arts since 1980. He brings to his classes a wealth of knowledge and experience on all aspects of oriental healing arts. He is also a graduate of the British school of shiatsu-do. He is a full time Tai Chi instructor.

