

EIGHT PIECES OF BROCADE: STANDING SET

Instructions by Shifu Roger Blough based on in-person learning from Dr. Yang, Jwing Ming.

The Eight Pieces of Brocade (Ba Duan Jin) medical Qigong routines were created by Marshal Yeuh Fei, a great Chinese military leader, born February 15, 1103 CE. The standing version was designed to strengthen his soldiers and the sitting version to heal wounded or sick soldiers. The soldiers, who were generally illiterate, learned the routine by memorizing the instructions in the form of songs.

List of the Pieces:	Prescription for the Number of Repetitions
1. Double Hands Hold Up The Heavens	24
2. Bend The Bow Like Shooting A Hawk	12 on each side
3. Lift Singly	24
4. Five Weaknesses . . .	3 sets, 12 each side
5. Sway Head and Swing Tail	12 each side
6. Two Hands Hold the Toes	16
7. Screw Fist with Fiery Eyes	8 each side
8. Seven Disorders . . .	3 sets of 24

General Points

- Do not practice when your stomach is full or you are hungry.
- Relax before and after the set, perhaps by taking a short walk.
- Face East when the sun is up
- Stand still before beginning to regulate your breathing and calm the mind.
- Breathe naturally through your nose during the exercises.
- Holding the extended position for a breath cycle allows you to raise the cells to a more excited state.
- Keep the toes pointing straight ahead and the knees pointing in the same direction as the toes.
- In pieces four and eight the hands on waist position brings energy to the center line, the hands on back position brings energy to the rear for the kidneys, the hands in front position brings energy to the front for the liver and spleen.

Points on Regulating the Breathing

- Regulate the breath until it is calm, smooth, deep and even.
- Inhalation and exhalation should be relatively equal.
- Inhale and exhale only to about 70-80% of lung capacity so that your lungs stay relaxed.
- Beginners should use Normal Abdominal Breathing; advanced practitioners can use Reverse Abdominal Breathing.

Preparation for the set: Hands hang naturally at the sides, close eyes, calm your mind, breathe regularly, and sink your Qi to the Real Lower Dan Tian (RLDT).

First Piece: Double Hands Hold Up the Heavens to Regulate the Sanjiao

Purpose: To regulate the Triple Burner meridian and increase Qi circulation in the front of the body.

Stance: Feet shoulder width apart.

Movement: Interlock fingers, sink the chest, round the back, push hands out to front, palms facing outward. Keeping arms straight, raise them above your head while raising your heels. Don't raise your shoulders or tense your back. Hold for three seconds, then lower your heels. Bend to left then right keeping lower back straight. Lower your hands to your sides. Repeat twenty-four times.

Advanced Variations: Don't raise heels on some repetitions. In addition to bending to the side, twist 45 degrees off directly lateral and then bend side to side while holding the twist position, shift weight to one leg and twist. Add the healing sound for the Triple Burner, Xi (pronounced shi) as your lower both hands to your sides.

Second Piece: Left Right Bend the Bow like Shooting a Hawk

Stance: Step your right foot out to as wide as double shoulder width horse stance.

Movement: Relax your hands and lift them up to the chest area, sink the chest. Bring the palms together, then separate them with the right hand moving past the right nipple while the left hand, changing into the "sword secret" hand form, extends to the left as if you were pulling a bow. To pull the bow, expand the chest. Turn the hips 45 degrees and then sink the Kua. Your eyes stare to your left at a very distant point. Then rise from the squat and lower your hands, circle them up to the chest and repeat the same process to shoot to the right. Repeat twelve times to each side.

Details for second piece: This piece is used to strengthen the kidneys and waist. Make sure when you squat down you keep your back straight and tuck your buttocks under. This emphasizes the kidney area and increases the Qi circulation there. Feel that you are really pulling a very strong bow.

Advanced Variations: Vary the angle of the arrow to high upward as if shooting a soaring bird and downward as if shooting a fish from a boat. Turn to the rear as if on horseback and shooting an enemy behind you. Shoot to the front as if you are on horseback and chasing an enemy.

Third Piece: Lift Singly to Regulate the Liver and Spleen

Stance: From the second piece, straighten up and move your right leg in so that your feet are parallel and shoulder width apart.

Movement: Move both hands to the front of your waist with palms facing up. With elbow leading, raise left arm above head and push upward with palm facing up and fingers pointed inward toward the center line. At the same time, lower your right hand, palm facing down, to your side ending with

the fingers pointing toward the front. You should feel that both hands are pushing against slight resistance, but do not tense your muscles. Hold this position for one breath cycle. Then lower the left arm and raise the right arm. Repeat twelve times on each side.

Details: When you “push your palms” do not tense your muscles but rather extend your force through the hands to stretch your arms all the way.

Advanced Variations: Don’t raise the lower arm until the upper arm has descended and the palms have faced each other for a moment to allow the Qi in the Laogong gates to balance. Lower hand fingers point to center-line. You can turn to the side of the up raising arm to twist your torso. Use the healing sounds for spleen (Hu) when your left arm descends and liver (Xu, pronounced shu) when your right arm descends.

Fourth Piece: Five Weaknesses and Seven Injuries, Wait and See Later

Stance: The feet remain parallel and shoulder width apart as in the third piece. Place your hands on your hips. Lift your chest slightly from the inside so that your posture is straight but do not thrust out your chest. This piece has three parts.

Movement: Lift and turn your head to the left and *look to the rear* as you exhale, return to the front as you inhale. Repeat to the right. Turn twelve times in each direction. Your torso should remain squarely facing the front so that your turning is done with the neck not the waist. For the second part, place your hands on your back at waist level fingers pointing inward toward the spine, thumbs on your waist. Do twelve more repetitions in each direction. For the third part, move both hands out in front of your chest at the level of your solar plexus, and hold them in a bow out from your chest palms facing up. Repeat twelve times in each direction.

Details: Strong emotions cause Qi to accumulate in your head. Also desk work can cause the neck and shoulder muscles to tighten, causing Qi to stagnate in the head and neck. When you turn your head, you loosen the muscles, blood vessels, and Qi channels in the neck, allowing blood and Qi to flow smoothly. It is important to really look to the rear to make the Qi move. When you look to the rear, visualize any illnesses and injuries left behind you.

Advanced Variations: Use Yongquan Breathing to lead the Qi from your Real Lower Dan Tian (RLDT) to your Huiyin cavity and Yongquan gates as you exhale and turn your head to the side. Then lead the Qi back to your RLDT as you inhale and return your head to the front. Hold the turn for one breath cycle.

Fifth Piece: Sway the Head and Swing the Tail to Eliminate the Heart Fire

Stance: Step your right leg out to the side as wide as double shoulder-width horse stance. Place your hands on your legs just above your knees with the thumbs on the outside of the thighs. Sink your Qi to the bottom of your feet and place your mind on the Yongquan gates at the bottoms of your feet.

Movement: Shift your weight to your left leg and press down heavily with your left hand on your left leg. Line up (extend) your head, spine, and right leg. Stay in this position for about three seconds, then return to the original position. Repeat to the other side. Turn twelve times in each direction for a total of 24 repetitions.

Details: When you hold your hands on knees with the thumbs pointed to the sides, you are expanding your chest and when you move your body from side to side, you are loosening the lungs and, therefore, taking in the excess Fire Qi from the Middle Dan Tian (Solar Plexus and the heart). You are also increasing the blood circulation which will take care of any numbness or soreness in the legs. Make sure when you lean to each side you don't drop your head.

Advanced Variations: Hold the turned position for one breath cycle. After three rounds, pause in the center, exhale, relax, straighten up and make the healing sound for the heart (He) or for the lungs (Siiii)

Sixth Piece: Two Hands Hold the Toes to Strengthen the Waist and Kidneys

Stance: Move your right leg in so that your feet are shoulder width apart.

Movement: Press both palms down slightly beside your waist. Inhale as you move your hands up in front of your chest and exhale as you raise them above your head. Point your fingers inward. Palms roll up as your arms move up. Focus your mind on your Mingmen cavity, GV 4, which is on your back at the same level as your navel. Hold this position for three seconds as you inhale. Then as you exhale, bend forward with your arms extended and keeping the back as straight as possible and hold on to your toes, ankles or knees, whichever you can reach. Pull your hands up slightly so that you are putting a gentle stress on your whole body and hold, while focusing your mind on the Yongquan gates in your feet. Hold this position for three seconds as you inhale and exhale. Then as you inhale, straighten up. Then exhale and gently push your palms down in front of your abdomen. Repeat for a total of 16 times.

Advanced Variations: Hold the toes for longer. Shift weight from side to side. Rock from side to side. Twist while rocking. Reach across and use hands and arms to twist. Make the healing sound for the kidneys (Chui) when you exhale and lower your hands after straightening up.

Seventh Piece: Left, Right Screw the Fist and Punch with Fiery Eyes

Stance: Step your right foot out to the side as wide as double shoulder-width horse stance.

Movement: Sink your stance as you chamber your fists at your waist. Turn your head and twist your Kua to your left, and extend left arm to the side in a spiraling punch. Glare fiercely at an imaginary opponent as you punch. Briefly tighten the fist at the point of imaginary impact. Relax both fists and return the hand to chamber. Repeat to right side. Repeat eight times to each side.

Details: This piece trains you to raise your spirit of vitality. When your spirit is raised, you strengthen your Qi flow and increase your muscular strength (Li). Concentrate your Yi (wisdom mind). Have a very strong image of punching forcefully, and your Yi will lead your Qi to the ends of your arms and legs.

Advanced Variations: Hold the punch and tension for one breath cycle. For some of the repetitions, punch forward instead of to the sides.

Eighth Piece: Seven Disorders and Hundreds of Illnesses Disappear and Are Left Behind You.

Stance: Feet shoulder width apart. Hands hang naturally at your sides.

Movements: This piece has three parts. The upper body positions are the same as in the fourth piece.

1. Place your hands on your hips. While exhaling rise up on your toes and stay as high as you can for three seconds. Then while inhaling, lower your heels to the floor. Do 24.
2. Change your hand and arm position to hands on your back at waist level, fingers pointing toward spine, thumbs pointing toward front. Do 24 more repetitions.
3. Change your hand and arm position to arms arcing out in front of your chest and palms up. Do 24 more repetitions.

After you finish this piece, stand still, keep your mind calm, and breathe smoothly and regularly for about three minutes.

Details: The different hand positions serve different Qi circulation functions. This piece smoothes out the Qi from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet. It stimulates the six Qi channels and two vessels that connect to the feet.

Advanced Variations: In addition to having the toes pointing straight ahead, do some repetitions with the toes splayed outward and some repetitions with the toes turned inward.

Additional learning aids:

Dr. Yang, Jwing Ming, *Eight Simple Qigong Exercises for Health*, book and DVD. Available from Qi Elements and YMAA Publications.

Qi Elements, *The Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade*, DVD. The standard routine and advanced variations.