

Taiji Qigong Primary Set

Reading:

The Essence of Tai Chi Chi Kung, pp. 85-101.

Purpose of the Set:

The Primary Set is a simple and easy to remember form designed to help beginners understand and feel Qi. Since the exercises are simpler than the Taijiquan form, the set allows beginners to concentrate attention on breathing and Qi. The exercises will help open the twelve primary Qi channels and let the Qi circulate more smoothly in the twelve internal organs, which is the key to maintaining good health. Another goal is to loosen up the internal muscles around the organs to remove any Qi stagnation, allow the organs to relax and receive the proper Qi nourishment.

How to Perform the Set

General Points:

- Feel your body is connected from your feet to your fingertips. Generate each movement from the feet and up the body through the waist and spine, and finally moving the arms and hands. Move the entire body like a soft whip.
- Use your mind to lead the Qi from the Lower Dan Tian to the limbs when you exhale and from the limbs to the Lower Dan Tian when you inhale.
- When exhaling, focus your mind on the image that your are pushing a heavy object, but don't tense your muscles. This image is what generates and moves your Qi. Lead the Qi to the palms and the feet by bringing your mental focus ahead of the palms and below the soles of the feet.
- Repeat each form 10 times.

(Advanced students can use reverse abdominal breathing while performing this set.)

The forms:

1. **The Qi is Sunk to the Dan Tian.** Stand still with hands at your sides at waist level and palms facing down. Bring your mind to the Dan Tian. Inhale and exhale deeply a few times to calm your mind. Then inhale and turn your palms towards each other and lift them to shoulder height while gently sinking the chest and expanding the back. Then turn both palms downward and lower them to waist level while exhaling and returning the chest and back to normal position. As you lower your hands, imagine that you are pressing something down and use the mind to lead the Qi to the Lower Dan Tian.
2. **Expand the Chest to Cleanse the Body.** From the finish of the previous exercise, inhale and start circling your arms up in front of you crossing on the way (as though you were pulling off a T-shirt) and then moving out to the sides. Sink the chest as you do this. Exhale as you move the arms out to the sides and expand the chest. The deep breathing and the movement of the arms loosen the muscles around the lungs. Visualize that you are expelling stale Qi and air from your body and lungs and pushing them away.
3. **Pour the Qi into the Bai Hui.** Now reverse your arm movements. As you inhale, move your arms in a circle out to your sides and up over your head. Then lower your hands, palms facing each other and visualize that you are taking in Qi from the heavens through your Bai-hui and pushing it down through your chest to the lower Dan Tian and finally through the bottoms of your feet into the ground. As you inhale, expand your chest forward. As your exhale, arc your spine backward and bring your chest in.
4. **Left and Right to Push the Mountains** After you have cleansed your body and absorbed Qi from heaven, you start building Qi internally and using it for training. As you inhale, raise you hands to chest height with the palms facing up while slightly arcing your spine backwards. Lower your elbows and turn your hands until the fingers are pointing to the sides and the palms are facing down, start to straighten your torso. Keep your wrists loose. As you exhale extend your arms to the sides. When the arms are halfway extended, settle your wrists and push sideways with the palms as if you were pushing two objects away. The torso is straightened and the spirit is raised. Inhale and bring your hands back with the palms facing inward while arcing your spine gently backward, then exhale and lower the hands in front of you with the palms down and the fingers pointing forward. Muscles should remain relaxed throughout the exercise.

5. **Settle the Wrists and Push the Palms.** Start by inhaling and raising palms upward as in the previous exercise. At chest height, lower your elbows and turn your palms forward and downward while starting to straighten the torso. Wrists are relaxed and fingers pointed forward. Exhale and extend your arms forward, fingers pointing forward. When your arms are halfway out, settle the wrists and push the palms forward. Straighten your torso. Inhale and draw your hands back with the palms facing your chest and spine arcing backward slightly. Then exhale and lower your hands to your abdomen while straightening your torso.
6. **Large Bear Swims in the Water.** Raise your arms in front of your abdomen with palms facing up while inhaling. Then while exhaling, extend your arms forward with the palms up. While inhaling move your arms out and to the sides, turning the palms down, then circle the hands to your waist as you rotate the palms upward. Continue by exhaling and extending you arms forward.
7. **Left and Right to Open the Mountain.** This is similar to the previous exercise except that it is done one arm at a time. While exhaling, extend your right arm to the left side palm up and rotate the body and circle the right hand to the right and down to your waist. Turn the palm down after your hand passes the centerline. Repeat on same side for a number of times. Switch to other arm.
8. **Eagle Attacks its Prey.** Exactly the reverse of Large Bear Swims in the Water, including the breathing.
9. **Lion Rolls the Ball.** Similar to Eagle Attacks its Prey, but using one arm at a time. Starting with your hands at your waist, exhale and extend your right arm to the side and then forward in a counterclockwise movement, turning palm down along the way. Inhale as you bring it back to the waist. Then repeat with the left hand clockwise. Repeat on same side for a number of times. Switch to other arm.
10. **White Crane Spreads its Wings.** Start with your arms crossed in front of your Solar Plexus. Then exhale and extend them out diagonally with the right arm up and the left arm down. Inhale while drawing the arms back to the starting position. Then exhale and push the left arm up and the right arm down.

Rock on Heels: This helps eliminate any Qi stagnation in your feet after standing still throughout the set.