

TAI CHI WARM-UP EXERCISES

These are the tai chi warmup exercises. The descriptive name for each exercise is given, followed by a description of the movement. Remember to move gently, never forcing anything and relax, breathing normally. You should do each exercise 21 times (or 14 if you are in a hurry). Be aware of how each exercise feels and which muscles are being stretched. Think about how you feel after completing each exercise. Do you feel a "burn" in a certain muscle? Does a part of the body feel warm, or cool? Do you feel energy moving anywhere in your body as you perform the movement? Even if you don't notice any feeling at first, always think about it. Sometimes the feelings created by the movement are very subtle, and we are training ourselves to be aware of these subtle changes as we move.

Standing between Heaven and Earth

-with your heels together and feet in the shape of a "V", grab one wrist with the opposite hand and stretch over your head, rising up on your toes. Exhale as you stretch upward.

(To the) Left, Open the Window to Gaze at the Moon

-with the feet a little more than shoulder-width apart (toes facing forward), grasp the left wrist with the right hand and stretch to the left, keeping the hands above the shoulders

(To the) Right, Open the Window to Gaze at the Moon – same as above, except stretch to the right instead of to the left.

Mandarin Ducks (Lovers) Facing Each Other

-with the legs spread wide, bend at the waist and let your arms hang downward. Shrug the shoulders and let the hands knock together gently. Breathe normally.

The Great Peng (Bird) Spreads Its Wings

-standing with heels together and feet in the shape of a "V", bring palms together in front of you with arms extended and spread them apart to the side. Bring them back to the front and repeat. Exhale as you spread your arms apart.

(To the) Left, the Green Dragon Examines (Feels) a Gourd (or, "Green Dragon Extends its Claws")

-feet are a little more than shoulder width apart. The left hand floats over the same spot in front of you, palm down. The right hand reaches to the right as if pulling back a bow and then strikes to the left next to the left hand, stretching the muscles along the side of the body. Reach back again and repeat. Exhale as you strike.

(To the) Right, the Green Dragon Examines (Feels) a Gourd – *same as above, only to the right.*

The Green Dragon Emerges From the Water

-with the legs spread wide, grab a wrist with the opposite hand and reach out in front of you and then bring them back between your legs in a “scooping” motion, as if you were scooping water backward between your legs.

The Lion Shakes Its Head (Left and Right)

-this exercise has a self-defense application. With legs a little more than shoulder-width apart, block with left hand and strike with the right elbow to the left, turning at the waist. Exhale as you strike. Bring the right hand back again to the right and strike again with the elbow to the left. When you're done with this motion, your right fist should be facing backwards over your left shoulder. As you strike with the right elbow, gently clench your left fist at your side.

Repeat Lion Shakes its Head to the right side

Descending to Earth and Growing Roots

-with legs spread wide, reach above you and grab one wrist with the opposite hand and pull straight down in front of you, bending at the waist. Exhale until you are empty. Now tug the wrist downward, bouncing very gently as you breathe normally.

The Child Worships (the Goddess) Guan Yin

-put your palms together in a praying manner, folding one thumb over the other. Extend your arms in front of you with the fingertips pointing upward. Keep the eyes on the fingertips and gently squat downward. NOTE: It is not important that you go very low for this exercise to be effective. Keep your eyes on the fingertips in order to keep your head straight and squat STRAIGHT DOWN, not bending over forward. Heels stay on the ground. The body will move straight up and down like a piston in a shaft. Don't do it to the point of pain. Even squatting down a few inches is effective.

All of these exercises should be done in a relaxed and gentle manner, never very fast or forcefully. Be aware of which muscles are stretching and how you feel as you perform these warmups. Remember to move smoothly and don't forget to breathe.

After the warmups, don't forget to do a “standing like a tree” meditation in the “riding the horse” posture before starting the practice of the Tai Chi form. The standing meditation is extremely important, even if you only do it for a minute or two. As you get stronger and more aware of your balance and breathing and as you get stronger, you should do the standing meditation for longer periods, but *do the standing meditation every single day*

Stirling Tai Chi Society
1123 N Ashland Ave

Chicago, IL 60622
773 252 7443
www.stirlingtaichi.com

keeping the mind on the Tan Tien, the area a few inches below the navel and an inch and $\frac{1}{2}$ behind the navel. This is where our attention should be throughout the warmups and the Tai Chi form. Imagine it as a ball of energy that gets stronger and warmer with each breath. Breathe from the belly, as always.