

Standing Posture Basics (last updated Dec 17th, 2011)

Standing Posture

There are three main phases to learning Taiji:

- 1) Learning the external movements. Your thoughts are not on the inside, so you don't have the sinking of qi. Once you've mastered this "know the form" stage, you will progress into the 2nd phase.
- 2) Your attention goes more to the inside (listening to your body and what's happening inside).
- 3) The third stage is the goal when "changes" (bian hua) come naturally.

Standing practice is the most important to taijiquan. Why? The three stages are all very compact inside because it is such a simple motion. It saves time, as you can work on all three stages in one move. Stand at least 15 minutes each time. There are roughly three stages to standing:

- Stage 1 (First 5 minutes) - calm (or train) the mind (only then can energy go to the dantian); this is the most important stage because you must quiet the mind before you can progress to the next stage. Dantian is located about 3 finger breaths below the navel and 1 finger joint in for an average person. In general, it is slightly below the navel.
- Stage 2 (Second 5 minutes or longer) - focus on circulation of the qi (changes of energy); feel the warmth around the navel area.
- Stage 3 (when you are able to get that feeling in Stage 2) - go on to use the next 5 minutes to preserve or cultivate that feeling. Stand as long as you wish at this point.

Breathe naturally – keep it shallow and long, don't force any of it

For beginners - start with 3 minutes and then add 1 minute each week until you can hold the posture for 15 – 20 minutes

Standing Post Requirements

- Stand with your head erect, feet at shoulders' width apart, legs slightly bent, and arms reaching out with bent elbows, just below chest height or lower, as if gently hugging someone.
- Touch the roof of the mouth behind the top row of your teeth, while keeping your mouth gently closed.
- Keep your ankles straight; maintain even distribution of weight on your feet. Keep weight off the heels and ball of feet. Keep knees over the middle of your feet. Pivot pelvis forward and backwards slightly to feel the weight move between heels and balls of the feet.

- Relax chest and shoulders, allowing your elbows to drop slightly, with your palms facing your chest.
- While standing, focus on an object about 10 feet in front of you and at eye level.
- Let your knees bend in response to the relaxation of your hips and waist. Keep knees over the middle of your feet.
- Engage your thigh muscles throughout this exercise – not tense them up. Feel it being firm.
- Try and feel your spine suspended from the top of the head, allow the natural curve to manifest itself. Your shoulder blades will gradually curve away from the spine as you attain this posture. Tuck your chin in to feel the back of the neck stretched.
- Come out of this position slowly by lowering your arms and then standing up.