

# Tai Chi Now

[www.tcsociety.com](http://www.tcsociety.com)

Newsletter of the TCSociety

Spring 2010

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## World Tai Chi Day

Mark your calendars: World Tai Chi Day is Saturday, April 24. UCLA will probably again host a celebration. Last year a group of TCSociety students carpooled to the celebration at UC Irvine. Anyone want to do it again this year?

## Current Workshops

A new cycle of six Saturday workshops taught by T. C. Hou will begin on June 19, to be held from 1:30 to 4:30 pm at the Yahoo Center\* in Santa Monica.

- June 19 Tai Chi Theory
- June 26 Tai Chi Energy
- August 7 Tai Chi Hand Movements
- August 14 Tai Chi Steps
- August 21 Tai Chi Power
- August 28 Tai Chi Healing

To reserve a seat, please call T. C. Hou at 323 798-8310.

## Free Introductory Classes

The Society will be giving complimentary introductory classes every three months, to be taught by T. C. Hou. The free classes will run from 9 to 10:30 am on Sunday mornings. The next three have been scheduled for April 4, July 11, and October 3. Current students are, of course, also welcome to attend. The classes will be followed by potluck picnics. The April 4 class will be held at Douglas Park\* in Santa Monica.

Free introductory classes have been given in the past. The Society hopes that announcing the dates well in advance will make it easier for prospective students to plan on attending. Many current students' first exposure to the Society was through such classes.



## A Bit of Chinese

Would you like to see how Chinese characters are drawn? Visit

[www.learningchineseonline.net](http://www.learningchineseonline.net)

Click on "characters" in the menu on the left. In the list of links that appears, click on "Animated Chinese Characters (by Xie, Tianwei)".

To view a short animated film for kids that shows how the letters in the pin yin romanization of Chinese are pronounced, including the tones, visit

*(continued on page 3)*

## Fees

Private lessons are also available; fees are competitive. Fees for group lessons are extremely reasonable—for example, less than city recreation departments typically charge. Still, any fee is an insuperable obstacle for some. Since the purpose of the TCSociety is to bring tai chi to everyone, volunteer labor can be accepted instead of fees, even volunteer labor for another non-profit group. However, such substitutions must be approved in advance by T. C. Hou.

## Current Classes

Instructor	Time	Location	Contact	Notes
Geoff Hull	Sat 8-9:30am	Studio City Rec Center, Beeman & Rye St.	(818) 761-6019 (818) 422-5176	All levels.
Hagai Izraeli	Sat 11-12am	Yahoo Center*, Santa Monica.	(310) 404-6911	All levels.
Tommy Kronenfeld	TuTh 9-10am; Fri 8:30-10am	Yahoo Center*, Santa Monica.	(310) 404-6811	All levels. Fri 8:30-9 focuses on the 3rd set.
Gene Walder	Sun 8-9:30am	Douglas Park*, Santa Monica 25th and Wilshire Blvd. NE corner.	(805) 579-0271	All levels.
Brian Weaver	MonWed 9-10am	Westwood Park, Veteran at Rochester Avenue	(310) 954-6488	Call to confirm Monday class

In addition to the above classes, which are open to all, the TCSociety gives classes that are open only to the residents, employees, customers and so on of various agencies and companies. Examples include Belmont Village (Westwood), the Institute of Courage of Sexy Hair (Topanga), Goodwill International Industries, and the Foothill Construction Company.

\*See back cover for locations.

# Think of the Form as a Set of Cartoons

A few weeks ago a student reported that T.C. was using a *Kung-Fu-Panda* sort of description to teach some students the beginning of the form, a great example of T.C.'s irrepressible good humor. He was prevailed upon to write it down so it could be shared with everyone.

Is Tai Chi a lengthy routine for you to memorize?

Most people forget the routine, then stop their practice after years of effort. That really is an unnecessary loss.

The Tai Chi Form is a routine. It is designed to help the teacher lead a group of students through uniform movements in a class. At the beginning, having memorized the sequence of routines offers some help. Just as in learning English, memorizing A, B, C in alphabetic order is only a starting point. Once you learn it, you can start to play with what you have learned. Certainly you will make words and sentences with what you have learned, instead of just chanting letters in alphabetic order all the time. The sequence of a Tai Chi form, just like the sequence of the alphabet, has no logic for the sequence—that makes memorizing the long routine a challenge to most people. However, a

Tai Chi stance has a complete logic in it.

As we all know, the design of a Tai Chi stance is based on the need for self defense. Therefore, efficiency is a must and there is no time to waste on unnecessary movement. A Tai Chi stance is designed with an assumption that one is facing a challenge from an equally strong opponent. Aiming at the ultimate victory by conserving energy for a vital strike becomes the strategy. In all Tai Chi stances, you can see three stages: yield, keep in touch, and win.

- ☉ “Yield” means to avoid any head-on collision.
- ☉ “Keep in touch” means always pay attention to the continuous development of a situation.
- ☉ “Win” means grab any opportunity and use it to the best. Therefore, by practicing a Tai Chi routine of 108 stances, one must win 108 times in 108 situations.

Tai Chi practitioners are actors—they understand the screenplay and give life to their roles.

Memorizing a Tai Chi routine is just like memorizing the sequence of a set of short stories in a book. There is no logic between the stories. How to make

it easier for us to memorize? There are many ways. Let us try one – to picture each story like a slide of cartoon and make a story with all the slides.

Let me try to transform the first section of Yang Style Tai Chi into a sequence of cartoons, like this:

太極拳

(Tai Ji Quan) Tai Chi Chuan  
Section One

0.

合太極  
(He Tai Ji)

Tai Chi in Harmony.

I am in meditation and united with the universe.

1.

太極拳起勢

(Tai Ji Chuan Qi Shi)

Beginning of Tai Chi Chuan.

I find myself on the banks of a river, transformed into a giant panda. I like to soak myself in the water with my arms floating up.

2.

右攬雀尾左纏

(You Lan Que Wei Zuo Peng)

Right Grasp a Sparrow's Tail and  
Left Ward Off.

A bird flies to me. I grasp its tail with one hand and play with it with the other.

3.

左攬雀尾右纏

(Zuo Lan Que Wei You Peng)

Left Grasp a Sparrow's Tail and  
Right Ward Off.

Another bird comes to me, so I let the first go and play with the second.

4.

捋  
(Lu)

Follow & Rollback to Trap In.

An elephant appears in front of me. I play with her by pulling her trunk.

5.

擠  
(Ji)

Squeeze.


She is not coming along, so I knock on her forehead.

6.

按  
(An)

Press.

I put my paws on her head and push down so she cries out.



張  
三  
手  
遺  
像

Upon moving,  
the body moves lightly and nimbly;  
it moves as a whole, connected, not  
part by part.  
Qi is abundant, flows freely.  
Shen concentrates within.  
No defect appears: no humps or  
hollows, no stops or starts.  
The feet are rooted. The energy  
from the legs, controlled by the waist,  
is delivered by fingers;  
feet, legs, waist act together, thus,  
whether advancing or withdrawing,  
creating opportunity and position.

**Chang San-Feng**  
late 14<sup>th</sup> century



7.

左顧右盼  
(Zuo Gu You Pan)

Glance Left, Watch Right.

I grab her ears and shake her head to the left and right.

8.

雙按  
(Shuang An)

Two Hands Press Forward.

But the elephant won't play with me, so I wave her away.

9.

橫揜手  
(Han Lie Sho)

Horizontal Split Hands.

I like the tall palm tree by my side, so I move it over my shoulder and try to plant it in front of me.

10.

刁手單鞭  
(Dao Sho & Dan Ban)

Hook & Single Whip.

I like to be a tree swinging in the wind. My branch wraps around an eagle while my other branch wipes away an annoying bee.

11.

提手上勢  
(Ti Sho Son Shi)

Lift hands to up posture.

An ape comes to tickle me. I hold his arm, lower my elbow and lift him. When he jumps up, I tickle him.

12.

白鶴亮翅  
(Bai He Liang Chi)

White crane spreading wings.

A snake comes to me. I dance with her like a white crane showing off his wings.

13.

手揮琵琶  
(Sho Hui Pi Pa)

Strum the lute.

I hold a lute like a lady and strum the strings with my beautiful paws.

14.

左擽膝右看掌  
(Zuo Lou Xi You Kan Zhan)

Left Brush knee & step with right push.

I clear my way with my left arm, brave

through and push an ape away with my right paw.

15.

退步白鶴亮翅  
(Tui Bu Bai He Liang Chi)

White crane spreading wings.

I dance back like a white crane with my snake friend again.

16.

手揮琵琶  
(Sho Hui Pi Pa)

Strum the lute.

Let me play the lute one more time.

17.

左擽膝步右看掌  
(Zuo Lou Xi Ou Bu You Kan Zhan)

Left Brush Knee to twist forward.

I clear my way with my left arm, brave through and push an ape away with my right paw.

18.

右擽膝步左看掌  
(You Lou Xi Ou Bu Zuo Kan Zhan)

Right Brush Knee to twist forward.

I clear my way with my right arm, brave through and push an ape away with my left paw.

19.

左擽膝步右看掌  
(Zuo Lou Xi Ou Bu You Kan Zhan)

Left Brush Knee to twist forward.

I clear my way with my left arm, brave through and push an ape away with my right paw.

20.

懷中抱月  
(Hui Zhun Bao Yeuh)

Hold Moon in Chest.

I am a giant panda, I can bring the big moon to my chest and turn it around with my arms.

21.

右搬攔捶  
(You Ban Lan Chui)

Move, parry and punch.

Be a big bear, lift a heavy bell, drop the bell, open the curtain and show off my paw.

22.

左搬攔捶  
(Zuo Ban Lan Chui)

Move, parry and punch.

Be a big bear, lift a heavy bell, drop the bell, open the curtain and show off my paw.

23.

右搬攔捶  
(You Ban Lan Chui)

Move, parry and punch.

Be a big bear, lift a heavy bell, drop the

bell, open the curtain and show off my paw.

24.

如封似閉  
(Ru Feng Si Bi)

As if an Enclosure.

My right paw got stuck by the curtain, I let it go, use my left paw to peel off the holding, then close the curtain.

25.

轉身抱虎歸山  
(Zhuan Shen Bao Hu Gui Shan)

Return Tiger to Mountain.

A tiger jumps out at me from a mountain. I hold it and bounce it back to the mountain.

26.

十字手  
(Shi Zi Shou)

Form a Cross.

I lift my hands to my chest and up they go.

27.

分身捶  
(Fen Shen Chui)

Split pounding.

I drop my arms to pound down on the drums, right and left.

28.

合太極  
(He Tai Ji)

Tai Chi into Harmony.

I bring my palms to my heart. I enjoy the world no matter what.

## A Bit of Chinese

(continued from page 1)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9Ayvjy-Dgs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9Ayvjy-Dgs)

Here's one for adults that's actually more helpful:

[www.hello-han.com/ch-education/yinjieku/hanziyinjieku-en.php](http://www.hello-han.com/ch-education/yinjieku/hanziyinjieku-en.php)

For Tommy's students, who are learning to count to ten in Chinese, here are two helpful videos:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD77sfgCRJl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD77sfgCRJl)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpSDvQKetjk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bpSDvQKetjk)

From the postures' names on this page, can you figure out what the Chinese word for "left" is? For "right"?

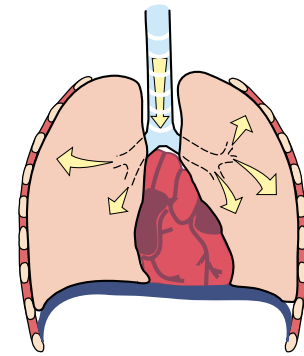
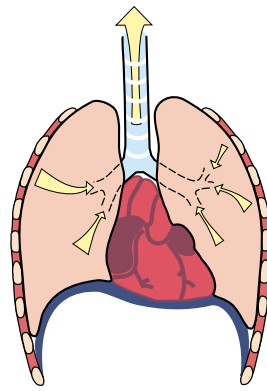
## Breathing

Breathing is almost synonymous with life. It may seem strange that one would need to practice breathing, but in fact most people don't breathe as well as they could.

Humans have two ways of expanding and compressing their lungs. It can be done with the muscles of the rib cage, and it can be done with the diaphragm, a cup-shaped sheet of muscle that lies beneath the lungs and above organs like the liver. Like the muscles in our legs, arms and heart, the diaphragm tends to weaken with disuse. A major cause of disuse is using the rib cage muscles instead, often for frequent shallow breaths.

Watch a baby breathe. Notice that its abdomen swells and collapses as it breathes, but its chest doesn't expand. It is breathing with its diaphragm—the muscles of the rib cage haven't yet developed. Yet a baby can cry loud and long. Vocal coaches urge singers to get power by breathing with their diaphragms, as do coaches in many sports, including the martial arts. Collapsing the chest and breathing from your diaphragm are important parts of tai chi. Breathing from the diaphragm has the additional benefit of stimulating the abdominal organs and the flow of lymph.

Breathing is one of the few body processes (blinking is another) that is under both voluntary and involuntary control. As such, it is a gateway that for many centuries has attracted people interested



in developing ways of consciously controlling other, involuntary, body processes. The branch of yoga called *Pranayama* is devoted to this. Very advanced tai chi practitioners can learn specialized breathing techniques that increase the energy delivered by a blow, but every tai chi player uses a pattern of breathing in every posture he or she does.

Simply noticing, several times a day, how you are breathing will help you improve your breathing. A number of qi gongs focus on breathing. Here is one, with four parts: Stand erect with the feet a shoulder width apart. Place the palm of the right hand on the belly, below the navel, with the left hand on top of it. Take four or five of your usual breaths while clearing the mind. Now pay attention to your breathing. Notice the movement of the abdomen, while taking four or five more breaths. Next, with each inhalation move the hands away from the abdomen, as if pulling it out. Move the hands in as you exhale. Exaggerate as much as you like for four or five breaths. Finally, move the right

hand to the back, opposite the left hand, which is still on the belly, and repeat part three. You may think it is impossible for the back to expand, but with practice it will, though not of course to the extent the front does.

Another aspect of breathing that's important in tai chi is breathing through the nose, not the mouth, while keeping the tip of the tongue against the upper palate, behind the front teeth. According to Chinese tradition, having the tongue in this position completes an energy circuit involving the two major energy vessels, the ren mai and du mai. If you are skeptical, once you have developed your ability to sense energy flows, try it both ways and see for yourself. Another, very obvious reason for developing the habit of keeping your tongue in this position is that in a fight it keeps you from biting your own tongue.

Learning a tai chi movement involves learning when one should be inhaling and when exhaling (sometimes explosively). But in daily life the ideal breath is long, deep, steady and smooth.



The Yahoo Center in Santa Monica is on the block bounded by Cloverfield and 26th, and Broadway and Colorado, with underground parking on Broadway and on Colorado. Go to the food court at ground level, at the plaza with the giant pitcher fountain.

Douglas Park is on Wilshire Blvd. between Chelsea and 25th St. Classes are in the northeastern corner.

For either site, if you are driving west on the 10, take the Cloverfield offramp. Driving east on the 10, take the 20th Street offramp. In either case, head north.

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