

TIPS FOR LEARNING

Now that you have my DVDs and the Classical Tai Chi Forum at your disposal, what will be the preferable way to utilize this vast information to advance your learning process and, at the same time, reap the health benefits along the way?

I am listing two slightly different recommended paths below:

1. Both paths starts with Lesson 1 Tai Chi Walk (also see Forum 16 Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tu8ptvmm6hA>). Proper Walking technique is essential to Square and Round Form. This lesson has great health benefits to lower body including the lower back. It is not easy to master. Be patient, give it time and many repetitions. One way is to start every lesson with some Walking before proceed to learn other movements.

2A. In this path, you follow the lesson sequence in Vol. II Tai Chi Form Instruction to Lesson 9 including the first Cloud Hand. You have learned primarily the Round Form so far. Then, switch over to learn Square Form from Vol. II Lesson 15 and the free DVD set on Square Form. Start from beginning until you reach and complete the first Cloud Hand. From and from then on, you could learn each lesson, both the square form and the round form together.

2B. Opposite to the above path 2A, start from the Square Form to the first Cloud Hand and then switch over to learn the Round Form to the first Cloud hand. Then, each following lesson learn both the Square form and the Round Form together. Since detailed verbal instructions and discussions are contained in Vol. II Lesson 1- 13. when you are learning the first eight lessons of Square Form, you will need to look at Vol. II Lesson 1-8 to understand the discussions on that lesson.

3. Early in the learning process, you could start practicing the internal moves such as the “turning move” and those moves and silk reeling exercises in the Youtube video shown in Forum 15 and 16. They illustrate fundamentally important concepts in Classical Tai Chi. Practicing these movements gives typical health benefits from internal movements similar to qi gong exercise. Some of these are quite advanced moves. Extended practice will be needed to master these moves.

All elements described above are synergistic with each other. Practicing one improves the other. Practicing these elements in turn, repeatedly, can bring you from time to time, the exhilaration of discovery that you can do certain moves correctly in addition to a sense of well being. The eventual goal is that you can play the entire Round Form using “internal” and that the internal energy will circulate in your body without break from beginning to end of the Form.

Key points on practicing Square Form:

1. To achieve internal movements, the body must have yin(stationary part) and yang(moving part) paired at the right place. Learning to set the yin-yang pair correctly, the first task is to learn how to set the yin part of the body correctly which is what Square Form trains you to do. That is why Square Form looks robotic-when one part of body moves the other parts of body remain completely still. Therefore, practicing Square Form the more robotic look, the better. If you do not maintain the stillness while other parts of body is moving, the objective of doing Square Form is compromised. You need to know that these yin-yang pairs practiced in the Square Form are imbedded in the Round Form dynamically transforming from one yin-yang pair to another to give the effect of constant motion and continuity.

2. Round Form should be played with continuity; while the Square Form should have a pause between each move. Make sure you make the most of this pause: Examine your body structure, is everything in the right place? Enjoy the sensation of stretching, rooting and energy. Prepare the next move so that the move is carried out with intent and conviction.

3. Be patient, pay attention to every little detail in the Form shown on the DVDs and try to play it accordingly. Pay special attention to the footwork. Square form is a golden opportunity to get these choreographic details right.

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