

Tai Chi for Beginners and Physical Education

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New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Comprehensive Health and Physical Education

- **2.5 Motor Skill Development:** All students will utilize safe, efficient, and effective movement to develop and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle.
 - A. Movement Skills and Concepts
- **2.6 Fitness:** All students will apply health-related and skill-related fitness concepts and skills to develop and maintain a healthy, active lifestyle.
 - A. Fitness and Physical Activity

National Physical Education Standards

- **Standard 1:** The physically literate individual demonstrates competency in a variety of motor skills and movement patterns.
- **Standard 2:** The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance.
- **Standard 3:** The physically literate individual demonstrates the knowledge and skills to achieve and maintain a health-enhancing level of physical activity and fitness.

Lesson 1 - Introduction - History - Benefits

1. Objectives:

- To acquire knowledge about Tai Chi's origins and benefits
- Differentiate between Qigong and Tai Chi
- Observe the Tai Chi set

2. History: Qi, Qigong, Tai Chi Qi (chi) (pronounced "chee")

- Qi means life energy, vital force, breath of life.
- Qi is everywhere (the intrinsic substance behind all things in the universe)
- Qi is not visible to the human eye but can be felt as a warm, tingling sensation.
- Qi travels in the human body through set pathways called meridians.
- Acupuncture is based in Qi

3. Qigong (Chi Kung) (pronounced "chee gong")

- **Gong (or kung)** means cultivation, practice, skill, mastery.
- **Therefore Qigong can be defined** as a system to cultivate and balance qi (life energy)
- Qigong has been researched, practiced, and perfectionated in China for the last 4,000 years. As a result, a wide variety of qigong forms, traditions, and training methods have been developed to strengthen the body, to prevent sickness, to speed up recovery, to relax the body, and to calm the mind.
- In China, Qigong is part of the healthcare system and nowadays Qigong is practiced worldwide especially for health purposes
- Qigong consists primarily in the repetition of one simple movement/form over and over -- typically from three or four to nine times -- before progressing to the next form.
- Qigong sometimes is called the 'Chinese Yoga' but is different in that qigong is much more an internal practice.

4. Tai Chi (Taijiquan - Tai Chi Chuan)

- Tai Chi Chuan was created in the 16th century as a martial art based on Qigong, Taoist philosophy, and other martial art techniques.
- While in Qigong one movement is repeated several times, Tai Chi is a series of continuous, flowing movements connected one to another. Some describe Tai Chi as a moving type of Qigong.
- In Tai Chi, the Qi can flow in a continuous stream throughout the practice, from one movement to the next and thus stimulating the life energy of the body, increasing its internal power, freeing up blocked pathways and allowing the Qi to flow throughout the body more effectively.
- Although Tai Chi was originally a fighting art to generate internal strength and power for combat, people in China started practicing Tai Chi as a health practice because of the numerous health benefits that comes along with the discipline.

5. Tai Chi Benefits

- Heal faster from injuries and illnesses
- Improve vitality
Better circulation, balance, posture, coordination, strength, and flexibility
- Stronger immune system
- Reduction of stress
- Emotionally stronger and calmer
- Live longer

6. Styles/Traditions of Tai Chi

- Cheng, Yang, Wu, Hao, Sun, and the Combination Styles.
- The Combination style mixes movements from all the internal martial arts.

7. Teacher performs the Tai Chi set (108 movements)

8. Review

- What is Qi?
- Describe Tai Chi

Lesson 2 – Stance

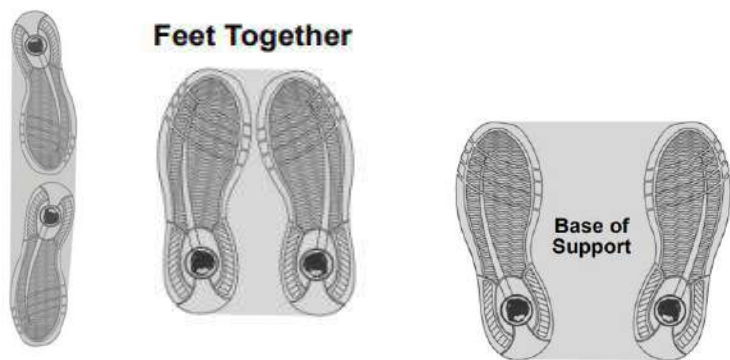
1. Objectives:

- To use a solid and stable stance
- To demonstrate the 'Tai Chi Step'
- To perform the first movements of the Tai Chi Set

2. Stance

- Taijiquan theory: The movements of Tai Chi have their root at the feet.
- Since everything starts at our feet, we need a solid and stable stance. You can't build a great building on a weak foundation.
- The larger the base, the easier it is to stay in balance.
- A solid foundation will make you stronger at neutralizing and deflecting whatever is coming at you.

3. By Partners



- # 1 adopt the position of two feet in line.
- # 2 push # 1 trying to make her lose her balance
- Switch roles

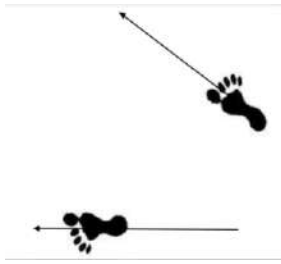
- # 1 stand with two feet together
- Same as before

- # 1 stand with feet hip-width apart
- Same as before

4. **'Tai Chi Step'**

It is essential to get the feet positioning right because the base created by your feet is what supports your body and gives you balance (equilibrium)

The Tai Chi Step is one of the feet position most used.



- Front foot forward and the back foot at 45 degrees outward, hips-width apart. (This is meant to aid in squaring the hips and deflect the opponent's attack)
- Check for in stepping as it compromises balance. If you were to slide the front foot back it shouldn't touch the back one.

5. **Tai Chi in a box**

The Tai Chi set of movements are done inside of an imaginary box (4 walls) orienting ourselves to one those walls or their corners.

6. **First Movements**

- Explain that some movements involve one, two steps, or a group of movements.
- Teacher demonstrates 3 times
 - Students look at the whole movement
 - Look at the feet
 - Look at the arms/hands
- Students copy as teacher demonstrates (3 times)
- Students lines rotate up one spot for each repetition
 - For this lesson focus on their Tai Chi step (no in-stepping)
 - Keep heels down
- Teacher observes students on their own as she calls the names of the movements
 - Teacher makes sure the students stance is correct

7. **Go over from the beginning with teacher calling the moves twice**

8. **Go over once without calling the names**

- At the end the teacher says "End of Tai Chi" and move arms up and down with parallel feet
- Stay in that posture without moving for three breaths enjoying the calmness of your body and mind.

9. **Review**

- What does it look like the Tai Chi step?
- By partners observe each other's stance and give feedback if instepping occurs
- Why is it important?

Lesson 3 - Alignment

1. Objectives:

- To relax body and mind
- To correct and demonstrate proper alignment
- To perform the next movements of the Tai Chi Set

2. Center of Gravity

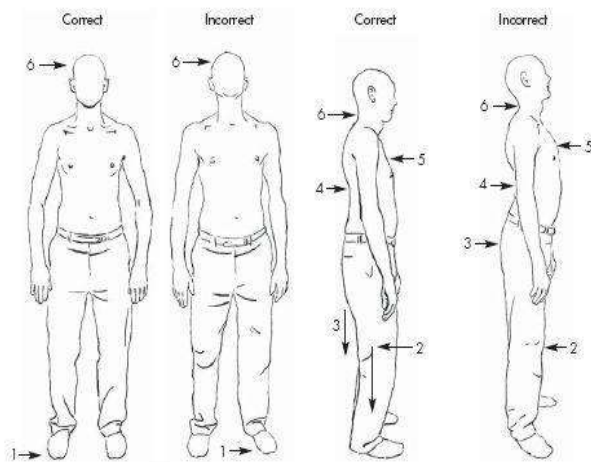
- The Center of mass
- An object is in balance if its center of gravity is above its base of support.
- If the line of gravity (the vertical line extending down from the CG) is outside its area of support then the object will topple.
- Demonstrate with a string (rope) tied around waist with a weight at the end.



3. Alignment

- Start with a balanced and comfortable stance.
- Next, keep an upright posture
- If the back is erect, the body is aligned optimally with the force of gravity.
- But if the back is leaning off the vertical, much energy is wasted as all the body's muscles and connective tissues must work to hold the body up against the pull of gravity.
- Having a good alignment within your base of support will make you comfortable, balanced, stronger, alert, and will avoid you injuries.

The Basic Tai Chi Posture



Correct Alignments

1. Feet parallel, shoulder-width apart.
2. Knees slightly bent and center of knee over center of foot.
3. Pelvis slightly tucked under, tailbone perpendicular to the ground.
4. Spine gently straightened.
5. Chest slightly rounded and dropped without collapsing.
6. Head and neck straight, eyes and nose parallel to floor.

Incorrect Alignments

1. Feet not parallel.
2. Knees locked and not over center of foot.
3. Buttocks and tailbone protruding backwards.
4. Back not straight, excessively arched.
5. Chest pushed out and raised.
6. Head tilting backwards.

- **Your feet should be parallel, hip- or shoulder-width apart, and pointing directly ahead.** Pick a distance that's comfortable. Your weight should drop down evenly to both feet.

- **Bend your knees slightly.** But, don't bend too far forward. Look down to make sure you can still see your toes.

- **Gently stretch your spine so your tailbone points to the ground.** This reduces the normal S-curve of the spine. Let the spine relax into this position, without force or tension.

- **Relax your chest, keeping your spine straight.** Avoid the normal military pose.

- **Rest your hands lightly on the sides of your thighs.** The arms are relaxed and the palms face backward at thigh level.

- **Keep your neck and head straight.** A head normally weighs about 8-12 pounds, which can create a lot of pressure on the spine. To avoid this, the head should feel slightly lifted above the vertebrae. Pull the chin back slightly and downwards.

- **Tongue tip is at the roof of the mouth.** This is the same position it would be in, when singing "la la la".

4. **By partners evaluate each other basic Tai Chi posture and give feedback as necessary.**

- Each pair is given a sheet with the description of the Basic Tai Chi Posture.
- One student reads the correct alignments and the other adopts the right posture.

5. **Go over the section of the set so far learned following the teacher**

- * Begin by relaxing your body with a deep breath.
- * Proper alignment in Tai Chi starts first by relaxing the whole body.
- * Then relax your mind
- * Relaxation will improve health by circulating the chi throughout the body without any inhibition.

6. **Next Movements**

- Teacher demonstrates 3 times
 - Students look at the whole movement
 - Look at the feet
 - Look at the arms/hands
- Students copy as teacher demonstrates (3 times)
 - Students lines rotate up one spot for each repetition
- Teacher observes as she calls the names of the movements

7. **Go over from the beginning with the new additions with teacher calling the moves**

8. **Go over once without calling the names**

- At the end the teacher says “End of Tai Chi” and move arms up and down with parallel feet
- Stay in that posture without moving for three breaths enjoying the calmness of your body and mind.

9. **Walking Meditation (This can be today or in the next class)**

A) Stand up and relax your abdominal muscles

Take 3 deep belly breaths

Feel your abdomen expand and contract with each breath

B) Repeat the word “IN” with each inhalation and “OUT” with each exhalation for 3 more breaths

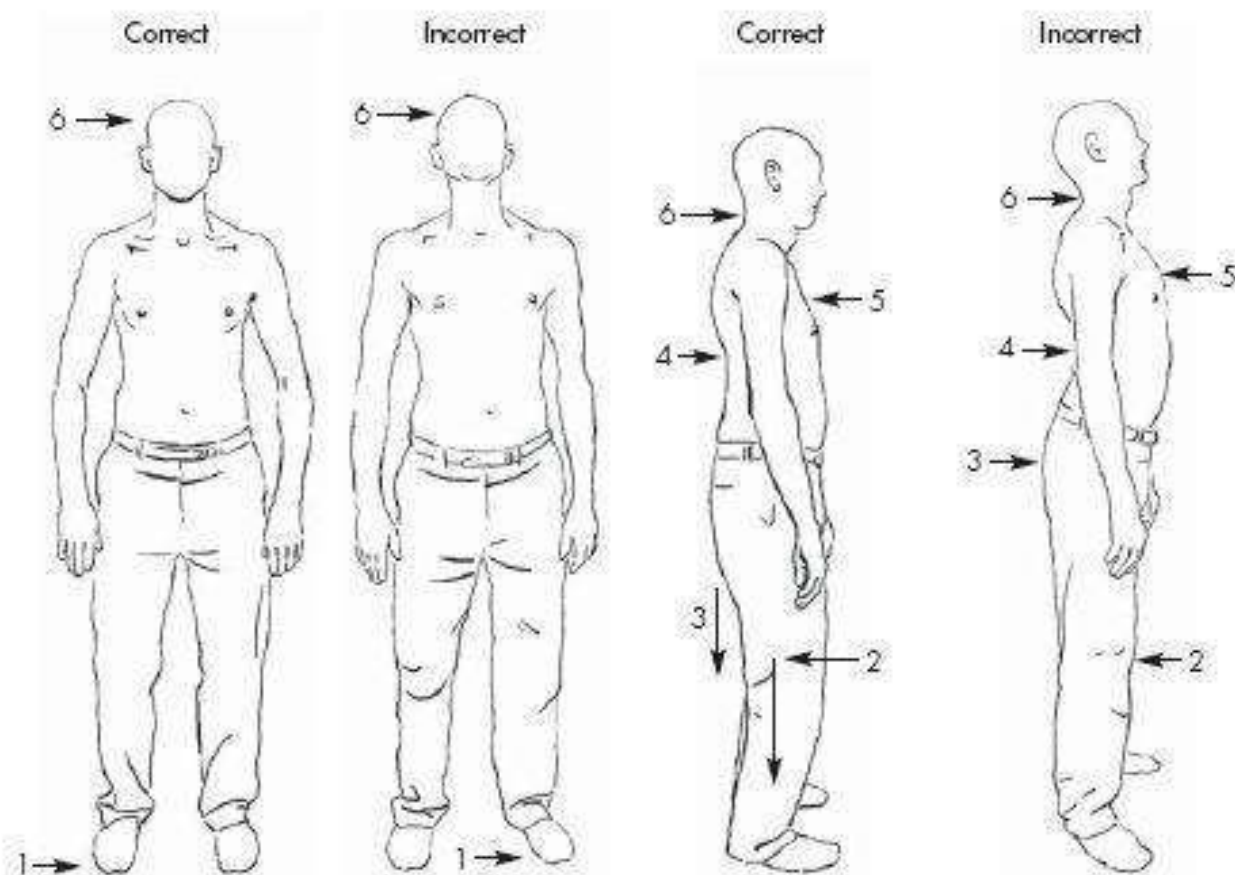
C) Walk quietly and with proper alignment using the following pattern:

One foot touches the ground at the beginning of the “IN” breath and the other foot at the beginning of the “OUT” breath

10. **Review**

a) What did you learn today?

The Basic Tai Chi Posture



Correct Alignments

1. Feet parallel, shoulder-width apart.
2. Knees slightly bent and center of knee over center of foot.
3. Pelvis slightly tucked under, tailbone perpendicular to the ground.
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OTHER LESSONS:

- Lesson 4: Roundness
- Lesson 5: Dantian
- Lesson 6: Breathing
- Lesson 7: Total Synchronization

TAI CHI FORM EVALUATION

	NO	ALMOST	YES
STANCE Correct feet positioning (Tai Chi Step) Hip-width apart (no in-stepping) Balanced			
ALIGNMENT Upright Posture Line of gravity inside area of support Relaxed Chest and knees			
ROUNDNESS Sphere-like body Circular arms (holding the ball) Smooth, circular movements			
BODY SYNCHRONIZATION Lower and upper body move in unison Movement starts from legs and torso transfers it to arms and hands Movements flow in a wave-like undulation from feet to hands			
RELAXATION The whole body is relaxed Breathing flows in a relaxed, continuous way Mind is calm			