

# T'ai Chi Ch'uan

## The Beginning Stance

Tai Chi is very different from a lot of things that you might study. There are very few things that can be done wrong in the usual sense of the word. However, to gain the full benefits of Tai Chi there are some points that should be observed.

The opening stance is relaxed with all parts of the body rounded and full. How do we achieve this?

- Start with the feet flat on the floor. All parts of the foot should contact the floor evenly. This will provide the base for all of the movements with the greatest amount of stability. Place the heels together and allow the toes to point out so the feet form a V.
- Sink down slightly so that the knees are bent. This allows the legs to separate thus forming a circle and opens the perineum.
- Maintain the waist facing forward and lightly tuck the sacrum under. Ensure that the back remains straight.
- The shoulders should be relaxed and lowered.
- Allow the chest to sink in slightly. This will round out the back and hollow the chest.
- The arms should hang loosely down at your sides with the elbows out. This will round out the armpits.
- The hands should be relaxed with the fingers close together and cupped slightly. The index finger and thumb form a U (the tiger's mouth) and rest along the thighs.
- The neck and head are relaxed but straight. The head may be tilted slightly forward so that the crown of the head points toward the ceiling. Tuck the chin in slightly.
- The crown of the head rises up as if pulled from above. To achieve this separate the body at the waist. From the waist down the body sinks to the floor, while from the waist up the body rises to the sky.
- The mouth should be closed but do not allow the teeth to touch.
- The tip of the tongue must touch the upper palette. This will complete the circuit between the two main energy channels - the functional channel which runs down the front of the torso and the governor channel which runs up the back of the torso.
- Breathe calmly in and out through the nose. Do not hold your breath during any of the movements.
- The eyes gaze out evenly but do not need to be fixed on any one point. Allow the eyes to be relaxed.
- The mind is quiet, but attentive. Listen to the sounds around you but do not focus on them. Your focus should be on the Tan Tien. The Tan Tien is located 1 1/2 inches below the navel and in the center of the body.