

T'ai Chi Ch'uan

Tai Chi Practice

One of the problems students suffer from is knowing how to practice on their own. What should I do? Should I go through what I know of the form a few times a week on my own? What if I am making a mistake somewhere and I instill errors in my mind?

Here are some of my suggestions for practicing.

After you have learned a new movement in class go somewhere and run through it several times. Don't wait and think that you will do it tomorrow because by then you will have forgotten it. To seat it in your memory you have to make yourself go through it and reinforce the knowledge in your mind. In fact you are welcome to stay in the classroom and practice. Take advantage of the free space.

Once you have learned a piece of the form, several movements or more, practice them several times a week at the least. The more times you go through the movement the more your body will learn it and the sooner I will be able to make corrections and help you learn the subtleties of the movement.

Find a location that is conducive to your practicing. Some people find that their home is not a good place because there are too many distractions. Others find that outdoors doesn't work because they are embarrassed by others who might be watching. Sometimes you can find space in an empty school yard or find a secluded space in a park, or go to the community center and see if you can use one of the rooms. Since we are working on becoming calm and relaxed you want to find some space that supports and nourishes that feeling.

So what should you be working on when you are practicing? Always the basics. Am I stepping slowly and softly, touching first my heel and then the toe, feeling the ground under my foot before I begin to turn and shift? Is my waist turning while I am shifting? Is my back straight? Am I sinking or just bending my knees? How is the timing of the movement? There are more questions to ask, but if you focus on the basics your Tai Chi will always be powerful and fulfilling for you.