
QIGONG FOR HEALTH AND WELLNESS

INTRODUCTORY MANUAL



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INTRODUCTION TO QIGONG: THE ART OF VITALITY

Welcome to the practice of **Qigong**. To the modern eye, Qigong may look like a series of slow-motion movements or simple stretches, but it is actually a sophisticated system of bio-energetic cultivation that has been refined over thousands of years.

The word itself is a combination of two Chinese concepts:

- **Qi (Vital Energy):** The life force that flows through all living things.
- **Gong (Skill/Work):** The merit or skill acquired through dedicated, consistent practice.

Together, Qigong is the art of mastering your own energy to improve health, enhance mental clarity, and achieve spiritual harmony.

THE EVOLUTION OF QIGONG: A 4,000-YEAR JOURNEY

The history of Qigong is not a single straight line; it is a tapestry woven from shamanism, philosophy, medicine, and martial arts. Its development can be viewed through four distinct eras:

1. The Shamanic Origins (Pre-200 BC)

Long before it was a formal system, the roots of Qigong lay in ancient shamanic "dances." Observations of nature led early practitioners to realize that certain movements—mimicking the fluid grace of a crane or the grounded strength of a bear—could heal the body and harmonize the spirit. Archaeological finds, such as the *Dao Yin Tu* (a silk scroll depicting 44 exercise figures), show that by the Han Dynasty, these movements were already being used for therapeutic purposes.

2. The Golden Age of Philosophy (200 BC – 500 AD)

During this period, the philosophies of **Daoism** and **Buddhism** deeply influenced the practice.

- **Daoists** sought longevity and "immortality" by aligning themselves with the rhythms of the natural world.
- **Buddhists** introduced sophisticated seated meditation techniques, focusing on the "emptiness" of the mind and the cultivation of internal stillness.

3. The Martial and Medical Integration (500 AD – 1900s)

As the understanding of the meridian system grew, Qigong became a cornerstone of **Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM)**. It was used as a "preventative medicine" to ensure Qi did not become stagnant. Simultaneously, martial artists at the Shaolin Temple and in Wudang Mountain realized that internal

energy work could make a fighter faster, stronger, and more resilient, leading to the birth of "Internal" martial arts like Tai Chi.

4. Modern Qigong (1949 – Present)

In the mid-20th century, the term "Qigong" was officially adopted to unify the thousands of different schools of energy work. Today, it is practiced globally not just as a cultural tradition, but as a scientifically backed method for stress reduction, balance improvement, and chronic pain management.

WHY PRACTICE QIGONG TODAY?

In our modern, high-speed world, our "Qi" often becomes scattered or depleted by constant stress. Qigong provides a way to:

- **Reconnect** the mind and body.
- **Reset** the nervous system from a "stress" state to a "healing" state.
- **Recharge** our internal battery by gathering energy from the breath and the environment.

By beginning this practice, you are stepping into a lineage of health and wisdom that has supported humanity for millennia.

1. FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF QIGONG PRACTICE

To move from simple physical exercise into the art of energy cultivation, a student must master several "internal" principles. These concepts transform external movement into internal medicine.

I. The Three Treasures (*San Bao*)

In traditional theory, the human being is composed of three essential energies. Your practice aims to harmonize and preserve these "Three Treasures":

- **Jing (Essence):** Your physical foundation—the body, the hormones, and your inherited vitality.
- **Qi (Energy):** The vital force that circulates through your system, fuelling your organs and movement.
- **Shen (Spirit):** Your consciousness and mental clarity. When the body and energy are calm, the Spirit shines.

II. The Power of *Song* (Active Relaxation)

The most important physical state in Qigong is **Song**. This is often translated as "relaxation," but it is more accurately described as "releasing." This is a term that is heard a lot in reference to taijiquan.

- **The principle:** You are looking for a state that is relaxed but not limp, and structured but not rigid.
- **The Benefit:** Chronic tension acts like a kink in a garden hose. By practicing *Song*, you open the pathways (meridians) and joints so that blood and energy can flow without resistance.

III. Finding Your Root and Centre

Stability in Qigong begins from the ground up.

- **Rooting:** Imagine your legs are like the roots of a great tree. Your weight should sink into the *Yong Quan* (Bubbling Well – Kidney 1) points on the soles of your feet. This connection to the Earth provides stability and allows excess "stress energy" to drain away.
- **The Centre (Lower Dantian):** Located approximately two inches below the navel and one inch inside the body, this is your energetic reservoir. All movements should be led by the waist and centred in this area.

IV. The Cycle of Energy Cultivation

Every practice session generally follows a natural energetic progression:

1. **Awakening/Discovering:** Tuning into the subtle sensations of warmth or tingling in the body.
2. **Cleansing/Purging:** Using movement and breath to release stagnant energy or emotional "heat."
3. **Circulating:** Guiding the refined energy through the body's pathways to nourish the organs.
4. **Storing:** Closing the practice by bringing the energy back to the Lower Dantian so it is not lost.

V. The Mind-Energy Connection (*Yi*)

The final and most vital principle is the role of the mind. There is an ancient saying: "*Where the Yi (wisdom mind) goes, the Qi follows.*"

- **Focused Intent:** Instead of daydreaming, you maintain a "soft focus" on the sensations of the movement.
- **Natural Presence:** You do not force the energy to move with intense visualization; rather, you create the correct physical and mental conditions, and the energy moves of its own accord.

2. PRACTICAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDENTS

For a successful daily practice, students should remember the **Four Dimensions of Engagement**:

- **Body:** Is my alignment correct? Am I "Song"?
- **Breath:** Is my breathing deep, quiet, and abdominal?
- **Mind:** Am I present in this moment? Is my intent clear?
- **Touch:** Am I using self-massage or "tapping" to help wake up the meridians?

The Path of the Practitioner: Qigong is often called "the art of effortless effort." Do not strive for a perfect shape; instead, aim for a perfect state of internal harmony. Let the movements be a byproduct of your breath and intention. This doesn't mean that the form isn't important; correct form is important for Qi flow but avoid striving mentally to have perfection as this creates tension in the mind and body. Let the form happen "organically" overtime by making the adjustments required as you learn and remember the movements.

QIGONG ROUTINES

Both **Taiji-Qigong ShiBaShi** and **Ba Duan Jin** are "medical" Qigong systems, meaning their primary goal is to improve health, balance, and energy flow. While they share the same goal, they offer very different experiences for beginners.

1. BA DUAN JIN (THE EIGHT BROCADES)

The **Ba Duan Jin** is one of the oldest and most popular Qigong sets in the world, dating back to the Song Dynasty. The name "Brocade" implies that the movements are as elegant and strong as high-quality silk.

Characteristics

- **Structure:** It consists of eight distinct movements, each targeting specific organ systems and acupuncture meridians.
- **Style:** It is more "athletic" and "stretching-oriented" than other forms. It involves a "tightening and releasing" of the muscles, which helps to pump lymphatic fluid and improve circulation.
- **Focus:** Physical alignment and the "internal massage" of the organs.

The Eight Movements

1. **Heavenly Lift:** Regulates the "Triple Burner" the internal organs (metabolism and temperature).
2. **Taoist Archer:** Opens the chest and strengthens the Lungs and Kidneys.
3. **Separating Heaven and Earth:** Harmonizes the Stomach and Spleen for better digestion.
4. **Wise Owl Gazes Backward:** Releases tension in the neck and shoulders, and prevents sickness and strain.
5. **Shake the Shake the Tail:** Clears "heart-fire" (emotional heat) and reduces stress.
6. **Touching the Toes:** Strengthens the Kidneys and the lower back.
7. **Angry eyes Angry Fists:** Increases vitality, strength and liver energy.
8. **White Crane Shakes the Tail Feathers:** Smooths out the Qi and helps prevent disease.

2. TAIJI-QIGONG SHIBASHI (18 MOVEMENTS)

Created in 1979 by Professor Lin Hou-Sheng, **ShiBaShi** is a modern synthesis of Tai Chi movements and Qigong breathing. It is often described as "Meditation in Motion."

Characteristics

- **Structure:** It consists of 18 fluid, continuous movements that flow into one another.
- **Style:** Very gentle, rhythmic, and dance-like. It lacks the "static tension" found in Ba Duan Jin.
- **Focus:** Emotional regulation and relaxation. It is particularly effective for calming the nervous system and reducing anxiety.

The **Taiji-Qigong ShiBaShi (Set 1)** is designed to be a complete system. Each movement builds upon the last, systematically opening the joints and stimulating the organ meridians.

Below are the 18 movements of Set 1 and their specific health benefits.

The 18 Movements of ShiBaShi (Set 1)

#	Movement Name	Key Health & Energetic Benefits
1	Waving Hands	Calms the nervous system, regulates blood pressure, and synchronizes breath with movement.
2	Expand the Chest	Expands lung capacity; specifically targets depression, anxiety, and heart health.
3	Paint the Rainbow	Stretches the sides of the body; benefits the Gallbladder and Liver; aids digestion.
4	Searching for Clouds	Strengthens the heart and lungs; excellent for shoulder mobility and clearing mental "fog."
5	Repulse Monkey	Increases spinal flexibility and stimulates the digestive tract and kidneys.
6	Rowing the Boat	Strengthens the lower back and knees; calms the mind through rhythmic circularity.
7	Tossing the Ball	Improves balance and coordination; gently stimulates the Triple Burner (metabolism).

8	Turning to Gaze at the Moon	Excellent for waist flexibility and stimulating the Liver and Spleen meridians.
9	Push the Mountain	Aids digestion and strengthens the internal organs through gentle abdominal twisting.
10	Cloud Hands	The quintessential Tai Chi movement; balances the brain hemispheres and relaxes the eyes. Activates the waist
11	Scooping the Moon from the Seabed	Increases flexibility in the hamstrings and lower back; improves circulation to the brain.
12	Playing with the Waves	Harmonizes the Heart and Kidney energy; excellent for emotional grounding.
13	Flying Dove Spreads Its Wings	Opens the chest to relieve asthma and chest tightness; encourages a feeling of "expansion."
14	Punch to strike	Increases vitality (Qi) and focus; helps release suppressed frustration or anger.
15	Flying Like a Wild Goose	Regulates the Lungs and moves Qi to the fingertips.
16	Spinning the Wheel	Restores flexibility to the entire spine and helps alleviate lower back pain.
17	Bouncing the Ball	Improves bone density and coordination; integrates the upper and lower body.
18	Sage Strokes his Beard	Collects and stores all cultivated Qi into the Lower Dantian; grounds the practitioner.

ShiBaShi Guidance for Beginners

The Flow of Qi

In ShiBaShi, the movements are meant to be continuous. Think of the energy as water flowing through a stream. If you stop abruptly, the water (Qi) pools; if you move too fast, it becomes turbulent. Aim for a **smooth, even tempo** throughout all 18 movements.

Coordination of Breath

- **Inhale:** Generally, occurs during movements that are upward, inward, or "opening" (e.g., *Expand the Chest*).
- **Exhale:** Generally, occurs during movements that are downward, outward, or "closing" (e.g., *Playing with the Waves*).

The "Internal" Benefit

Beyond the physical, ShiBaShi is a form of **emotional hygiene**. By moving the body in these specific patterns, you are physically "shaking off" the day's stress and inviting a state of *Wu Wei* (effortless action) into your life.

Comparison Table for Beginners

Feature	Ba Duan Jin	Taiji-Qigong ShiBaShi
History	Ancient (Song Dynasty)	Modern (1970s)
Pace	Slow with static "holds"	Continuous, fluid flow
Difficulty	Moderate (requires flexibility)	Easy (very accessible)
Primary Benefit	Physical strength & organ health	Stress relief & mental calm
Best For...	Morning energy and "waking up"	Winding down or active meditation

TRAINING TIPS FOR BEGINNERS

1. **Don't Hold Your Breath:** In the beginning, just breathe naturally. As you get comfortable, try to inhale on "upward/opening" movements and exhale on "downward/closing" movements.

2. **Soft Knees:** Always keep a slight bend in your knees. This allows the Qi to flow through the "Bubbling Well" points in your feet into your legs.
3. **Sink the Shoulders:** Beginners often hold tension in the shoulders. Imagine your shoulder blades are heavy weights sliding down your back.
4. **The "70% Rule":** Never stretch to your maximum. Keep your movements soft and rounded to avoid blocking energy flow.