

Shibashi / 18 Qigong / Tai Chi - Chi Kung

Beginners guide for Set 1

Before you begin your Shibashi: Tai Chi - Chi Kung (or any Chi Kung or T'ai Chi Chuan), take a few moments to compose yourself, check your posture, calm your mind and emotions, centre your breathing, and to find 'Wu Chi'.

Wu Chi begins as a standing posture, but really should be a state of being, and encompasses all that we strive for and seek to maintain in our bodies, minds and 'being' during our Chi Kung and T'ai Chi Chuan practice - and really doing anything else as well. It should eventually feel as a state of complete balance within the body and mind, and a total unity with your surroundings/environment.

Imagine the Golden Thread - like a puppet's string from the Heavens gently lifting up the crown of the head, lengthening the neck and drawing in the chin...also like a puppet, the rest of the body, and in particular the bodyweight is suspended from the crown point. The spine should feel long and open with the coccyx feeling 'weighted' so that the lumbar spine flexes downwards. Hips soft, knees soft, feel the weight in the legs and feet flowing down into the ground. The jaw should be relaxed (teeth not clamping together), with the tip of the tongue lightly touching the palate (like you are going to say the letter 'L', but leave the tongue there), shoulders loose, chest relaxed and slightly sunken (not puffed out), arms relaxed by the sides. Make sure your weight is 50/50 in the legs, but slightly more in the heels than the ball/toes. Have a slight feeling of 'gripping' the floor with the toes (but without clenching the feet or going tense) to support the ankle and raise the arch.

With time and practice, all this should be second nature...or even better, first!

Once you have aligned the body as above, quieten the mind, and focus on deep abdominal breathing until you feel ready to begin. On an out-breath sink a little more into your stance, and then begin as you breath in...

1.) Opening Form (Merging Heaven & Earth).

Standing in the Wuchi, keep feet flat, sink at knees then slowly lift and draw hands up to shoulder height breathing in, roll over top and breath out as hands fall back down, sinking at knees. Always move from the lower DanTien. Inhale as hands rise, exhale as they fall. Abdominal breathing. 6x

2.) Broadening One's Chest.

As no.1, but as the hands reach upper chest open to sides palms facing each other, arms out to sides, then back in and down. Inhale as hands rise up and out, exhale as they come back to centre and down. 6x

3.) Dancing With Rainbows/Painting Rainbows.

One hand goes over the crown palm down, the other goes out to side palm up, fluid and willow like, shifting the weight from one leg to other. Inhale as weight goes into right leg, arms to the left, exhale as the weight goes to left, arms to right. Gaze out over extended fingers. 6x

4.) Cross Hands/Circling Arms.

Sink at knees as you cross both arms in front of the lower body, right on top of left, then arc upwards and outwards as you rise from centre. Arms flow out and back and then down again sinking back into knees. Inhale as you rise, exhale as you sink. 6x

5.) Twisting Waist & Swinging Arms (like Repulse Monkey).

Keep lower body still (no up n down), just gentle turning at waist. One arm out to front palm up, other drops down to swing back up and behind the shoulder and over to push back to the front. Inhale as the arm swings up, exhale as the arm pushes forward until the palms cross. 6x (3 each side)

6.) Rowing A Boat.

Sink down into knees as both arms swing down then out and behind you, then up and over the shoulders back to front in circles. Rise and inhale as the arms come up palm up, sink and exhale as the arms fall palms down. Arms do not cross in this one. 6x

7.) Holding A Ball.

Imagine you are holding a soft ball in the palms of your hands. Lift the ball up to eye level and across your body, and as you reach across, turn your body and allow the opposite heel to lift off the ground as the hand reaches eye level. Inhale as your palms rise, exhale as they fall. 6x (3 each side)

8.) Carrying The Moon (Cow Gazes at Moon).

Imagine you are holding a balloon (the Moon!) between the palms. Sink as you carry the balloon past the knees, and lift up around the shoulder to behind the head gently. Swing back down to go other side. Inhale as you lift the balloon, exhale you it falls. 6x (3 each side)

9.) Twisting Waist & Pushing Palms.

Sit hands on hips palms open and up. Push your open palm out (fingers up) and across the body to opposite shoulder height, by turning the waist. Inhale as palm comes back towards the waist turning palm over, exhale as palm goes away. 6x (3 each side)

10.) Playing With Clouds (Cloud Hands).

Finishing the previous, allow the hands to make a ball shape, left hand on top, palms facing each other. Shift the weight to the left leg turning the hips/waist as you travel, turning the upper palm to face you as you go. Change the arms over then repeat the other way. Inhale as turning waist and weight to the left, exhale as turning to right. 6x

11.) Scooping From The Sea.

Step forward into Bow stance with left leg, leaning forward to cross hands in front of shin, but not over-extending your reach, like Cross hands/Circling Arms (No.4), rise up raising arms over head, hands separating smoothly, as you keep your spine straight, shoulders relaxed, and then down to start again. Inhale as your arms raise, exhale as they fall. 6x

12.) Playing With Waves.

Rocking your weight from front leg to back, and forward again, lift your front (left) toes as you roll back, and lifting back (right) heel as you roll forward. The arms swing at the shoulder so that they are palm down as you roll back, and swing up to about upper chest height pushing out. Inhale as you roll back, exhale as you push forwards. 12x

13.) Spreading Your Wings.

Roll weight forwards and back as in Playing With Waves. As you sit back open your arms sideways palms facing each other, at chest height inhaling, close arms towards each other as weight comes forward exhaling. 12x

14.) Spinning Wheels/Wheels of Fire.

Back to Wuchi stance. Sink at knees keeping spine straight pointing down, draw a circle with the fingertips to the left side, up, over, and down the right, turning and moving from the waist. Inhale as you rise up, exhale as you fall. 3x to the left (anticlockwise), then 3 to the right.

15.) Flying Like A Goose.

Sink down into the knees, rising up from the centre let the arms float upwards and out to the sides just above the shoulder, like a bird's wings, then float back down to each other as you sink at knees. Inhale as you rise, exhale as you sink. 6x

16.) Punching.

Loose fists sit on hips, palm up, punching out to middle at chest height as you exhale, pulling back to waist as you inhale. Use the turning of the waist to move the arms. 6x

All Meridians should now be fully opened.

17.) Bouncing A Ball.

This exercise should now balance the Chi in and around the body. Opposite hand and foot rise off the ground together, bouncing up onto the toes and flicking the fingers up as you reach the top. Inhale as you raise and lower the right hand and left foot, exhale as you raise and lower left hand and right foot. 6x

18.) Pressing Your Palms (Shao`Lin).

This will gather and concentrate the Chi to the lower Dan Tien, where it is stored. Palms face up, fingertips together, lifting up to upper chest height, rising up from knee, inhaling. Palms turn down and press down to lower abdomen, exhaling. 6x

now play with your hands!!!

Play with your hands to feel and experience whatever you may find. Push open palms toward each other, pull them apart, turn them over etc. Feel what happens....

Now....

Practice every day!!