

# FOURTEEN IMPORTANT POINTS ON PRACTICING *TAI JI QUAN*

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1. *Observe both interior and exterior.* Keep tip of tongue on roof of mouth. Look inside, look outside; listen inside, listen outside. When doing two-person exercises, keep eyes fixed at the opponent's sternum (breastbone).
2. *Posture:* Ears over shoulders, shoulders over hip, head erect to maintain crown point. Pull crown point away from tip of coccyx. Always rotate around a pole that runs through the top of the head and out the anus. Also, imagine wrapping around a 5 gallon water bottle. Hips are slightly tucked forward and open to wrap around. Maintain crown point, extending the crown point and coccyx away from each other.
3. *Dantian, shoulders and hips face opponent, connecting into weighted leg.* Extend force from the *dantian* through the weighted foot and out the extended arm. Take force through extended arm, through *dantian*, into foot and into earth.
4. *Relax.* Suspend from crown point, keep muscles relaxed, move lightly, like a cat. Move without resistance, heaviness, or contracted muscles.
5. *In the form, move with respiration.* Withdrawal/neutralize on inhale, extend/attack on exhale. When doing the form, concentrate on the inhale and exhale.
6. *Use four gate condensing breathing .* Inhale from palms and soles of feet to the *dantian*, while contracting energy into the *dantian*. Exhale from the *dantian* to the palms and soles of feet. Maintain crown point, and keep aware of palms and soles.
7. *The yi (mind) guides the qi and breath. Qi and breath guide the body.* First, you lead the body by following the breath. Later, you lead with your mind.
8. *Equalize interior and exterior.* In practice, make the interior light and the exterior heavy, until only your skin separates internal from external, like a water balloon in water. Eventually, both interior and exterior are pure *qi*, pure energy.

9. **Balance yin and yang.** *Tai ji quan* can be translated as “*yin yang* fighting style”. *Yin* means to empty and absorb; *yang* means to connect and extend. It also implies maintaining the soft within the hard and the hard within the soft; and moving while staying still, and staying still while moving. *Yin* turns to *yang* and *yang* turns to *yin*. It is the basis of martial application.
10. **Root.** When coming forward, visualize energy spiking down from the heel deep into the ground, and then from the ball of the foot deep into the ground. Never allow weight to leave the heel. If your knee is beyond your toes, you have lost your root by losing your heel spike. When moving to the back foot, root through heel and ball, with deep spikes going deep into the ground.
11. **Sinking and linking.** Sinking drops the *dantian* away from the crown point, towards the weighted foot root. It allows the opponent’s force to move through you into the ground, and also sets the frame for application. Linking connects the fascia and tendons through the *dantian* towards the palms and soles of the foot. It is required in all applications.
12. **Neutralize your opponent’s attack** . Neutralize means to empty and absorb through the *dantian* into the weighted foot. Always face the *dantian* towards the force, and into the weighted leg. Neutralization allows an attack, if you connect at the strategic moment. You must be able to go from connection to emptiness, or from emptiness to connection, in an instant.
13. **Use your internal energy to control your opponent** . Use your mind and *qi* as well as physical contact to sense his/her movement and intention. Merge in order to control.
14. **Apply short power or long power.** Long power utilizes a *taijiquan* application to bring the opponent off balance. It follows a neutralization of the opponent’s attack, and requires connected linkage. Short power (*fa jing*) involves a burst of vibratory energy emanating from the *dantian* through your weighted foot into the ground, and simultaneously through the resistance of the opponent through their ground path. Both long and short power require that the weighted foot be under or beyond the center of the opponent.