

The Eight Silk Brocades

By [Mimi Kuo-Deemer](#)

The Eight Silk Brocades, in Chinese Ba Duan Jin, is the most popular Chinese Qi Gong Form. It dates back to 168 BCE. There were scrolls unearthed inside ancient temples that depicted images of people moving and describing these movements as a healing practice. The Ba Duan Jin as a whole is broken down into eight separate sections, each focusing on a different physical area and Qi Meridian. The Ba Duan Jin training not only has its own great benefits, but is also complementary to Tai Chi practice.

1. Two Hands Support the Heavens for the Triple Heater

Place straight feet at shoulder width, knees bent slightly. As you breathe in, hands will lift. Once they are at the level of the forehead, they interlace. Continue breathing in until the arms reach overhead, stretch looking up. When you breathe out, release the arms out and down. The knees soften as your arms settle down. Repeat.

2. Open the Bow Left and Right to Let the Arrow Fly

Feet are placed a little bit wider apart. The toes can turn slightly out. The hands start as fists in front of the chest. Create an L shaped bow with your left hand. Imagine you're opening a bow and drawing the string with your right hand. As you do this, the knees bend and you look in the direction of your L. Inhale as you come back to center. The back of the hands meet, then exhale. Switch. Start with making an L with the right hand and pull the arrow with the left hand as if it's in a bow, pulling the string back, inhale as you come back to center. Repeat.

3. Raise the Hands to Condition the Stomach and Spleen

Start with the feet straight at shoulder distance, knees soft. Breathe in, the hands rise up and then they come apart. The left hand (palm up) goes up starting at the level of the ear and the right-hand (palm down) starts at the level of the ribs then presses down. So, the two hands press apart. They separate heaven and earth, or earth and sky. Then inhale, the arms windmill apart. Exhale, the two hands again press down. This time the right hand goes up and the left presses down. Repeat.

4. Looking Backward to Eliminate the 5 Fatigues and 7 Illnesses or The Wise Owl Turns Its Head to Relieve Disease and Fatigue

Feet start straight at shoulder width, soft knees. Breathe in, the hands come in a little bit. Breathe out, turn your head towards the left as you fan open the fingers, which are like the wings of your owl. Then inhale back into center. Exhale, turn right, letting the fingers fan out. Inhale, come back to the center. Repeat.

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5. Nod the Head and Wag the Tail to Calm Heart Fire

Feet should be placed wide apart with toes turn a little bit out. The hands slide down to where your knees are on your thighs. Take a breath in. Exhale over towards one side, the left. Then move around through the center all the way to the right. Then inhale you as you move your back up into the starting position. Reverse the movement. Start from the right. Exhale, then move around through the center all the way to the left. Then move up as you inhale. Repeat.

6. Two Hands Climb the Legs to Strengthen the Kidneys

Feet should straight at shoulder distance. Start with both hands on the lower back (kidneys). Breathe in, then slide down the hands on the back of your two legs. Then lightly trace with your fingers along the inner legs as your rise up. Once you get to the groin area, then hands lift towards the sky. Finally let your hands float down back to the neutral position. Repeat.

7. Punching with an Angry (Intent) Gaze to Increase Strength

The feet are at shoulder width, knees are soft. Make fists with both hands and place them at the sides of your waist. Breathe in, then breathe out as you punch with one hand bending the knees. Inhale as you bring the fist back to center and unbend the knees. Exhale as you punch with the other fist, bend the knees. Inhale as you bring the fist back unbending the knees. Repeat.

8. Shake the Back 7 Times to Eliminate the 100 Illnesses

Place your feet at shoulder distance. Start the movement with a chin roll, knees bend and fold down your back. Remember to fold to the level that doesn't strain your back. Then root your feet. When you uncurl, the knees stay bent and the hips move a little forward as the arms relax back. Be very careful to not let the head drop back. Exhale as you move back to center. Then in a fast move, lift and lower the heels like a little jump keeping the toes touching the floor. Repeat.