

Basic Moves

Part One

1. Centering

Benefits:

Strengthens deeper structural or "core" muscles that help natural alignment; keeping knees slightly bent engages thigh muscles and stabilizes knees.

Tips:

Be aware of the soles of your feet. This is essential for feeling "grounded" or connected with the earth.

2. Heavy Arms

Benefits:

Releases tension in the neck and shoulders; replenishes fluid in the shoulder joints.

Tips:

Imagine that your arms are heavy like ropes or pendulums.

3. Riding The Horse

Benefits:

Strengthens thigh muscles, which minimizes stress to the knees; increases ankle flexibility; improves balance.

Tips:

Movement is rooted in the feet and powered by the legs to help your posture, imagine that you are balancing a book on your head.

4. Crane Takes Flight

Benefits:

Coordinating movement with breathing enhances the flow of Qi in the body; arm movements add a cardiovascular benefit.

Tips:

Feel light, unrestrained, uplifted; inhale as you raise your arms, exhale as you lower them.

5. Bear Roots on One Leg

Benefits:

Strengthens thigh and hip muscles; improves balance; strengthens and stabilizes spine; trains you to keep shoulders relaxed when stressed; promotes correct positioning of hands and wrists for the Tai Chi movement.

Tips:

Imagine that your hands are resting on two poles for balance.

6. Stable and Open

Benefits:

Improves balance; increases the flexibility of the groin muscles; strengthens hip and thigh muscles.

Tips:

During the turning movement, sense a connection between your tailbone and the heel of your weight-bearing foot.

7. Holding The Moon

Benefits:

Hands are positioned at midline throughout the movement and act as a marker; helping reinforce proper positioning of the trunk over the pelvis.

Tips:

Be sure to keep your neck, shoulders, and elbows relaxed and heavy. You may experience a sense of connection between your fingers as you hold this position. Imagine that there is a line or an electric current between each pair of fingers and the thumbs.

8. Gathering the Stars

Benefits:

Aligns neck vertebrae; builds arm strength; expands muscles in the chest; opening the arms can have an uplifting effect; provides practice in sensing Qi while moving.

Tips:

As you open your arms, imagine that you are reaching out to embrace the stars.

9. Tai Chi Stance

Benefits:

Strengthens thighs; improves balance; increases ankle flexibility; lengthens calf muscles.

Tips:

Practice balancing in this stance when standing on a moving bus, subway, or boat.

10. Bear Moves with Crane Arms

Benefits:

Arm movements add a cardiovascular benefit and strengthen the upper body; synchronizing breathing with movement has an energizing effect.

Tips:

Keep arms relaxed to help feel Qi in the fingertips as you move.

Part Two

11. Tai Chi Fold

Benefits:

Increases hip flexibility; trains correct movement when pushing, pulling hitting, throwing and blocking.

Tips:

Your knees must be slightly bent in order to perform the move correctly.

12. Moving the Moon

Benefits:

It can help prevent back injuries when turning; builds strength and endurance in shoulders and arms.

Tips:

Practice this as a moving Qi Gong exercise; keep your finger aligned in the Holding the Moon position to maintain the flow of Qi.

13. Basic Bear

Benefits:

Increases hip flexibility; increases circulation to the hip joint, which tends to have a poor blood supply.

Tips:

Imagine that your head and torso are an upright column rotating over stable legs.

14. Walking/Skating

Benefits:

Improves flexibility in the joints, improves coordination.

Tips:

Vary the pace. Try this very slowly, then more quickly. To sense qi in the fingertips, keep your shoulders relaxed and arms heavy.

Part Three

15. High Step

Benefits:

Improves balance; increases thigh strength because knees are bent; increase hip and ankle flexibility and calf strength.

Tips:

Practice relaxing your legs; stand up, place both hands under your thigh and lift it and hold it. Then let it drop.

16. Flying Crane

Benefits:

Improves shoulder flexibility and arm strength; enhances coordination; coordinating breathing and relaxed movement enhances the flow of Qi.

Tips:

Imagine that you are a graceful crane flying high above the clouds.

17. Toe Kick

Benefits:

Increases flexibility in hip and groin muscles; improves balance; increases leg and hip strength.

Tips:

If you have trouble balancing use a wall or stable chair for support. Alternatively, lower your kicking leg so that your toes touch the ground to steady you.

18. Dancing Crane

Benefits:

Opens the chest and improves posture; enhances balance; arm movements add a cardiovascular benefit; coordinating movement with breathing can have an emotionally uplifting effect.

Tips:

Coordinate your breathing with the movement; inhale when expanding, exhale when gathering. Focus on your palms and fingertips as you open and close your arms since this enhances the flow of Qi in the body.

19. Tai Chi Stance with Fold

Benefits:

Increases flexibility and strength in hips and legs; improves balance in a wide stance.

Tips:

Keep knees bent and remain at the same height throughout the movement.

20. Power Move

Benefits:

Excellent for improving coordination; arm movements increase hip flexibility.

Tips:

The motion should be rooted in the feet, released through the legs, guided by the torso, and expressed through the fingers. Imagine throwing a ball underhand.