

# About Regulating the Body

## Summary

Since Tai Chi exercises are martial arts coupled with Health Qigong, the first step in learning and practicing Tai Chi is regulating the body (调身). This is followed by regulating breath (调息), mind (调心), Qi (调气) and Spirit (调神).

Regulating body means consciously keeping body in harmony with breathing and mind. The mind must be peaceful for the body to be in a calm and relaxed state. The crucial key to regulating body is to keep the head and the tailbone upright, so that the entire body can be upright and centered without tilting. At the same time the body joints must be loose to let Qi circulate in the body smoothly and freely. The entire body can thus act as a single, harmonious and uniform unit.

All the power of Tai Chi is generated from the feet, controlled by the waist and Kua (胯), and manifested by the fingers. The feet serve as the root for the body. The Kua is the upper thighs which connect the lower body and the waist. The Kua must be loose and relaxed to support the entire body. Loose Kua does not imply opening the groin area. This vital area must be protected by keeping knees slightly bent inward. The hip joints which connect the upper thighs and the waist must also be loose and relaxed in order to build up a firm root which consequently let the entire body act as a single unit.

To lead a manifestation of the Jin (劲, strength) from the body to the fingers, one needs to sink the shoulders and elbows, and store the Jin in the chest and spine. “Draw in the chest and arc the back” (含胸拔背) is a basic posture in Tai Chi as well as in other Chinese martial arts.

The same principles that govern how to regulate body in a stationary position, i. e. relaxation, balance, and firm root, also apply to step movements as in an actual combat situation. All movements in Tai Chi must be performed with a unified body and correct posture in a continuous fashion without any stagnation. Only when the root (the feet) is firmed can the body be relaxed and agile, the mind settled, the Qi sinks to Dan Tian (气沉丹田) smoothly and naturally, the Jin manifested to its maximum through the fingers, and the Spirit of Vitality elevated.