Learning the 48 Form Set of Tai Chi

In some Chinese martial arts traditions, a student always faces south when beginning to do a Form. This is because the south is the bringer of warmth and good fortune. You may feel you wish to follow this tradition. In any case it is good to begin always in the same place, facing the same direction, since this helps you to remember the movements. If you train outdoors you begin to associate, say, the garden wall or the sycamore tree with a particular movement. This is my experience. However, once you have 'got' the Form it will not matter where you stand. In describing the movements of this sequence we shall use the Western clock face, 1 to 12, to locate them. You imagine yourself standing in the centre of a horizontal clock.

During the 1920s, Chinese army officers and politicians combined with a number of famous martial artists to found centres of martial arts training. The stated aim of these centres was to improve the fitness and morale of troops, and foster health, strength and fitness in the nation. This move brought about contacts between martial arts teachers and experts which might not have otherwise taken place. It gave an impetus to training and a focus. Some of the men and women who were influenced by these centres survived the Japanese invasion of China, the turmoil of the Revolution and the hectic years of the post-revolutionary period. In turn they influenced the decisions of the State Commission for Physical Culture and Sports in China who produced what is called the Simplified Form of Taiji (Tai Chi) or 24 Step (Forms) Beijing (Peking) Form of Taiji, during the 1950s. This Form is mainly an offshoot of Yang-style Tai Chi. A video and book in English was produced on the Form, and it had wide popularity. In a sense this Form is easy, if any Tai Chi can be said to be easy; it is also relatively short; in any event the demand for something more testing, some longer Form, was satisfied by the 48 Step, or 48 Forms, of Taiji, also born in the 1950s.

The question of translations haunts martial arts literature, and the use of the word 'Step' only really makes sense if you think of it as 'steps to be taken', in the sense of 'what you must do to'. So a translation would read: 'the 24 steps (Forms of movement you must do)'. Unfortunately, for universal clarity, Western people have become accustomed to calling the whole sequence of movements a Form. Chinese books translated into English have called each separate group of movements a Form, and have called the whole sequence of movements a Set. Ergo, a Set consists in this instance of 48 Forms. It seems preferable to fall in with the Chinese translators to preserve some uniformity in describing the movements here. Even so I prefer the older Western usage. A custom which confuses the issue even more is the Western translation of each separate group of movements of the Set by the word Posture. This is because there are in each Set a number of positions which can be taken and held, statically, for training purposes and purposes of Chi Kung. When the Set is performed, these positions or Postures are never held and so cannot accurately be called Posture. What the Chinese mean by a Form is those movements which are done between one Posture and another and the final position of each movement. Thus:

**Form** - the most widespread Western term for the whole movement series
Form - the Chinese translation for each separate, named, movement
Posture - the Western term for the different statically taken positions
Set - the Chinese translation for the whole movement series.

When reading or listening you just need to be clear in which sense the words are being used.

One more word about translation. If you are familiar with some of the old Tai Chi Forms you will notice some differences in terminology. The two most notable examples are Step Back and Whirl Arms (Step Back to Drive Monkey Away) and Fan Penetrates Back (Flash the Arm). Obviously the Chinese translators did not know the naked significance of flashing!

Below is a list of movements in the Set; these are each covered in detail, in the same order, later in this chapter. Some movements are repeated; probably because their exercise, martial and Chi Kung significance is considered more important. For instance the movement called Grasp the Sparrow's Tail is repeated several times to stimulate the Chi in a particular manner. Consequently, there are not 48 different movements or Forms, but 48 Forms.

Preparation and Beginning
White Crane Spreads Wings
Brush Left Knee and Twist
Left Single Whip
Play Guitar (Lute) Left
Stroke and Push
Strike, Parry and Punch Left
Ward Off, Roll Back, Press and Push Left
Diagonal Leaning
Punch Under Elbow
Step Back and Whirl Arms (Step Back to Drive Monkey Away)
Turn and Push
Play Guitar (Lute) Right
Brush Knee and Punch Down
White Snake Puts Out Tongue
Pat Foot to Tame Tiger
Turn Left and Strike
Threading Palm and Crouch Down
Ward Off Standing On One Leg
Right Single Whip
Wave Hands Like Clouds
Part Wild Horse Mane
High Pat On Horse
Kick With Right Heel
Strike With Both Fists
Kick With Left Heel
Punch With Concealed Fist
Needle At Sea Bottom
Fan Penetrates Back (Flash the Arm)
Kick With Right and Left Feet
Brush Left and Right Knees
Step Up and Punch
As if Closing a Door
Wave Hands Like Clouds
Turn Right and Strike Fair Lady
Works With Shuttles
Step Back With Cross-over Palm
Press Down Palms With Empty Step
Stand On One Leg Holding Out Palm
Push Forearm With Horse Stance
Turn Body With Large Strokes
Swinging Palms and Crouching Step (Single Whip Squatting Down)
Step Up and Cross Fists
Stand On One Leg to Ride the Tiger
Sweep Lotus With Leg
Bend the Bow to Shoot the Tiger
Strike, Parry and Punch
Ward Oft, Roll Back, Press and Push Right
Crossing Hands
Closing.

When you see other people doing this Set proficiently you will observe two broad categories of performance. One will be those people who have learned from a good teacher, and they will reproduce it as accurately as they can. The other will be those people who have learned accurately and who have absorbed the Set into their own way of doing Tai Chi. The latter's performance will be influenced by such things as the effects of learning the older Yang style, or Chen style or Wu style; the result of Chi Kung, Pa Kua Chang or Hsing-I training; or a mixture of these. As much as a book can, given the space available and the limits of the written word, the following descriptions give an accurate account of the way the Set is done in China today. From time to time changes to a Set are made. Such changes are usually small.
Preparation and Beginning

Stand as in Figure 1 facing towards 12 on an imaginary clock. You are relaxed and alert. Pause for as long as you wish, so that you can concentrate on the matter in hand and forget about everything else. When you are ready, raise the left heel until the toes alone are on the ground, then place it flat down, toe first, the width of your hips away from your right foot, so that both feet are parallel to one another; both flat on the floor. As you take this small step, rotate both arms in their shoulder sockets, a little, so that your palms face behind you, to 6 on the clock, your elbows bend slightly and both knees bend a little. All the movements should be slow and synchronized.

Once you start to move, you move at the same speed throughout the Set. You never stop moving until the end. Then bring your arms forward and upward as high as your shoulders, elbows bent a little outwards and wrists forming a continuous curve between hand and arm. Fingers are spread a little and palms hollowed (Figure 2).

Lower your elbows bringing them in towards your lower ribs and let the hands follow simply, then press the palms down level with the navel. Simultaneously with the descent of the arms, bend your knees a little more. If the bent knee position is too hard on your knees then 'stand high'; that is, bend your knees only marginally.

White Crane Spreads Wings
Turn your body a little to the left, shifting your weight on to the left leg. As you do this, bring your left palm up in front of your left shoulder, about the same distance from it as the length of your upper arm, and bring your right arm across your body so that it is under your left palm, waist level, as if holding a ball with both hands (Figure 3). Bring your right foot close to the instep of your left foot, heel raised and look in the direction of your left hand.

Move your right foot backwards and a little outwards and shift your weight on to it, turning your body to the right, bringing your right arm, palm vertical and facing inwards, across to the right, head height, and lowering the left palm, downward facing, so that the fingers are pointing towards the right elbow (Figure 4). Raise the heel of your left foot.

Complete this Form by 'brushing' the left palm across the front of your body, fingers pointing to the front, raising the right palm a little higher, and bringing it closer to your head, palm inwards (Figure 5).

**Brush Left Knee and Twist**
Turn the body a little left, raising the left arm, palm in, level with the face, and lowering the right arm, palm passing face and breastbone. Turn the body right, bringing left foot, heel raised, close to right instep, right palm continuing to circle down past right hip and up as high as face, palm in, while left palm crosses in front of chin and descends to a position opposite right ribs (Figures 6 and 7).

Turn the body towards the front once again, 12 o'clock, stepping with left foot towards 11 o'clock, push forward with the right hand, past your right ear and out in front of your face as you 'brush' down in front of your left knee with your left palm downward facing, fingers front (Figure 8).

Left Single Whip
Shift body weight firmly on to the right leg, bending the knee and raising the toes of the left foot, turning the body to the right; simultaneously let the right arm, palm down, move out to the right with the body turn and bring the left palm forward, upward and round to the right level with the left shoulder.

Replace toes of left foot on the ground and shift body weight on to that foot, then place right foot beside the left heel, toes only touching the ground and pointing away at right angles to the left heel. As the body changes position the right arm bends at the elbow, palm up and under the left elbow (Figure 9).

Fig. 9

Now step towards 3 on the clock face with the right foot and shift the weight on to it. As you begin this step gently place the left fingertips just below the right wrist. As you shift your weight on to the right leg move both hands, still touching, in a soft curve from left towards right round to 3 (Figure 10).

Fig. 10

Continue this sequence by shifting weight back on to the left leg, knee bending, and raise the right toes. Turn the body a little to the right and with hand/wrist still touching curve the palms out to 4 then 5 then 6 on the clock through a horizontal arc (Figure 11). (This movement is similar to a movement of the Pa Kua Chang Swimming
Dragon Form (Set). It reminds us that these modern Sets are composites or syntheses of older Sets.)

Turn the body back towards 12 or 1, likewise the right foot turns in the same direction, sole flat on floor, and left heel is raised. As you do this bend the right wrist down smoothly, bringing all fingers and thumb together in a hook or beak, and push the beak out towards 3; left palm turns upward (Figure 12).

Turn the body left and step out with the left foot towards 9 on the clock. Shift weight on to the left foot, keep the right arm with the beak outstretched and slightly bent at the elbow, and bring the left palm, turned towards the body, past the nose and left shoulder, and push it out towards 9 (Figure 13).

Play Guitar (Lute) Left
Bring your right foot forward a few inches to place the toes behind and to the left of the left foot, opening the right hook hand to travel round in a horizontal arc, elbow almost straight, ahead of the right shoulder as you press down in front of you with the left palm to waist level.

Lower the right heel so foot is flat and, putting your weight on it, squat down on the right leg, almost straightening the left leg and placing the left heel, only, on the ground; your right palm circles out and down in front of your waist and your left palm circles up and forward so that you end in a position similar to that of playing a guitar, or lute (Figure 14).

Stroke and Push

Lower the left hand and raise the right as if pushing someone away to your right front corner, stepping to your left front corner with your left leg and shifting your weight on to it. Your body turns to face in the same direction as your right hand and the left palm also faces in this direction (Figure 15).

Both arms and the right foot move together: stroke down towards your body with both palms, your left coming to your left hip and your right in front of your abdomen; right foot steps beside left foot, heel raised (Figure 16).
Bring your right arm up in front of your chest and 'point' the fingers of the left hand towards the right forearm, stepping with your right heel towards 10 on the clock face. The movement continues with a shifting of the weight on to the right foot. (This movement is similar to the Ward Off Right of Yang style.) (Figure 17.)

Shift weight backwards once more on to left leg raising right toes, then return weight to right leg, lowering toes; at the same time, slide the left palm over the right forearm and push out the left palm as if pushing someone away from you, cupping the right palm below and back from the left elbow.

You then repeat the movement on the left side by stroking down to your right hip with your right hand and to the abdomen with your left, the left foot stepping beside the right foot, heel raised. Left arm comes up in front of your chest and right fingers 'point' at left forearm; left foot steps towards 8 on the clock, heel only, then shift weight on to left foot. Repeat on the right side shifting the weight on to the right leg, raising left heel, sliding right palm over left forearm and shifting weight back on to left leg and pushing out with vertical right palm with left palm below right elbow and back from it. Stroke down with both hands bringing right foot close to left, heel raised, then step out with right foot towards 10 raising right hand in front of chest and pointing left fingers at forearm.

**Strike, Parry and Punch Left**
(You will have noticed by now that in Tai Chi Forms the weight is shifted back, almost always, before another movement is made. Begin to anticipate this and it will help you to learn. A saying which I coined years ago for my own students is: 'When in doubt, shift your weight'.)

So, shift weight on to the left leg, drawing the right palm, upward facing, to the right hip in a downward curve, stretching the left arm out ahead, palm facing away from the body, raising right toes (Figure 18).

Continue to circle the right palm obliquely back and outwards, bending the elbow so that the palm comes to rest ahead of the right shoulder, downward facing; at the same time lower the left hand in a fist to the right lower ribs, palm down; weight is shifted on to the right foot and the left foot joins it, heel raised (Figure 19).

Press down to the right hip with the right palm, striking forwards and downwards with the left fist, backhand, bringing the left heel down with the leg almost straight, more or less in line with the left arm (Figure 20).
Shift weight on to the left foot, and step forwards with the right foot, heel only on the ground, bringing the left fist back to waist level and the right palm round in a swinging action, and forwards, as if to push aside a punch.

Shift weight on to the right leg, punching forwards with the left fist, vertically held, bringing the right palm beside the left forearm, inwards facing (Figure 21).

**Ward Off, Roll Back, Press and Push Left**

Weight shifts to left leg, toes of right foot are lifted and body turns right as left palm opens to push a few inches (5-10 centimetres) across to the right and right palm descends upward facing to right hip.

Weight shifts to right foot, flat, and left foot steps slightly ahead and to side of right, toes touching only, as left palm descends, upward facing in front of waist and right circles back then forward to rest at chin level above left, as if holding a ball (Figure 22). Just like Figure 19 but lower palm open. Step forward with left foot, shifting weight on to it, knee bent, raising left arm ahead of chin, palm facing chin, almost straight, pressing down to hip level with right palm (Figure 23).
Turn body a little to the left so it is facing forwards, 9 on clock, thrusting forwards at hip level with right palm, upward facing, and turning left palm in a small circle so that palm faces away from chin. Weight shifts back on to right leg, both palms stroke downwards (Figure 24), past lower abdomen as body turns 90 degrees to the right, and palms move upwards to finish with right at shoulder level facing away from body and left level with right armpit facing towards body.

Continue by shifting weight on to left leg, turning body back through 90 degrees, as left arm pushes forward at shoulder height, almost, palm facing body, and right fingers rest on wrist of left arm.
Weight shifts on to right leg and left toes are raised, heel on floor, as right fingers and palm slide over top of left hand and then both palms separate at shoulder height, downward facing, elbows bent to about 90 degrees.

Weight shifts on to left leg and both palms push downward and forward steeply, then upward in a gradual ascent to shoulder height (Figure 25).

**Diagonal Leaning**

With weight still on left leg turn right foot through 45 degrees to face 12 on the clock, pushing both palms outwards in a slight arc as if pushing open two sliding doors, then weight shifts on to right leg and left foot turns inwards to stand parallel with right. Weight shifts on to left foot and right foot joins it, heel raised, as right palm sweeps down and up in an arc and left sweeps across in a horizontal arc so both arms are folded across chest, left nearer the body. During these two moves you face diagonally right, then front towards 12.

Both palms form fists (Figure 26) beginning to push away from the chest, still crossed. Weight remains on left foot as right steps out to the right towards 3/4 on the clock. Weight shifts on to right foot, flat, and right fist moves up level with forehead as left fist descends to left hip, palm down.

**Punch Under Elbow**
In this Form you move through 180 degrees by turning to your left. Weight shifts on to left foot, as you turn right open palm in a small circle in front of your face, left then right, so palm faces your nose; and left palm circles, palm flat down left then right to return to side of hip.
Weight shifts on to right foot, flat, and left heel rises so that left toes are placed opposite right heel, body turning left and both arms moving to hold a big ball, left palm up and right palm down at right side of body (Figure 27).

Body turns further left and left foot moves round to left, resting heel on ground, as right arm rises in a curve across the body to finish palm facing body, out to the right, and left palm presses down beside left hip.
Weight shifts to left foot, and trunk turns right round to 9 on the clock, right foot following to end about six inches behind and beside left foot, heel raised; at the same time the left palm presses back and down beside left hip and right palm follows the body turn, rising open ahead of face.
Weight shifts back on to right foot as left open palm moves forward and upward, crossing above the right arm as right pulls down, to make a fist, and stops in front of the abdomen. Left heel is on the ground, toes raised; both palms are facing inwards (Figure 28).

**Step Back and Whirl Arms**  
(Step Back to Drive Monkey Away)
Turn body to the right and with the movement lower the right open palm in a big arc past the right outer thigh, palm up, and sweep it back and up to shoulder level so it stands out as though you were about to throw a ball with it. Simultaneously the left palm makes a small curving movement so that it is facing horizontally upwards, fingers pointing away, as if holding a saucer of milk. Left heel rises and toes only touch ground.
Step backwards with left foot, touching ground with ball of foot first then roll flat, and shift weight on to it. Rear right arm turns to present a palm down position and palm rises slightly then dips slightly to stretch out in front, 9 on clock, as left palm, upwards facing, pulls back down to left hip. Both feet are flat.
Movement repeats on left side. Step back with right foot, toes only touching ground and circle right palm to face up taking left palm back in a deep curve, palm up, then step right back with right foot, weight shifting on to it; and send left palm forward, down facing and drawing right palm, upward facing to right hip (Figure 29).
Repeat these two Forms, right and left: making four Step Back and Whirl Arms in all.

**Turn and Push**

Place the toes of the left foot behind and slightly to side of right foot, thrusting right palm up and out a little to right, level with face; left palm descends, palm up in front of right ribs (Figure 30).

Pivot left on both feet to face between 5 and 6 on the clock, bending right arm a little at elbow to face the palm down and press a little further down with the left palm.
(As you learn the Set you will appreciate that the movements flow into one another so that in the previous sentence when it says 'press a little further down with the left palm' this is really a continuation of the previous movement.)

Step a few inches towards 4 with the left foot and draw the right foot after it, heel raised, while making an arc down and across the body with the left palm to finish beside the left thigh, palm down, fingers pointing forwards; right palm pushes ahead almost vertical to finish at arm's length in front of the face (Figure 31). Drawing the back foot after the front is called Following Step.
Pivot on both feet to the right, round to 9 on the clock, ending with left foot flat and right heel raised. As you turn draw the right arm down in an arc across your left ribs and raise left arm, palm up behind and to the left of your head. This is the beginning of a repeat of the previous move, in the opposite direction and arms and legs reversed. Step towards 11 on the clock with right foot, weight on it, and draw left in a Following Step, heel raised, as you continue your downward arc with the right palm and a push forward with the left palm. This is a repeat of the previous movement but with opposite arms and legs.

Repeat the first movement towards 7 on the clock face and the second movement towards 1. Four similar moves in all, to four different corners.

**Play Guitar (Lute) Right**

(The original Yang-style terminology called this movement Lifting Hands, and the left-sided version (see page 49) Play Guitar. This was presumably because most people play the guitar with the left hand ahead of the right.)

Take a short step back with left foot, shifting weight on to it. As you do, turn body slightly to right and draw back left palm in front of left shoulder, raising right palm forward and upward in front of right shoulder, arm outstretched; both palms face down. Right heel raised.

Place right heel down, raising toes, with leg almost straight, bringing right palm directly in front of face, palm inward, and left palm forward opposite right elbow, palm in. (Same as previous Play Guitar but reversed.)

**Brush Knee and Punch Down**
Keep weight on left leg and draw right foot back to front/side of it, heel raised; palms pull back to abdomen, facing one another.
Step forward with right foot, heel down, turning body to left, raising right palm to left side of face, palm in, and left palm below right wrist, downward facing.
Shift weight to right leg, sole flat, drawing left foot, heel raised, behind/beside it; turn body to right, 9 on clock face, carrying right palm, outstretched arm, ahead of right shoulder, palm up, and left palm following it, fingertips on right forearm, lightly.
Shift weight on to left leg, raising right heel, toes remain touching ground, and take left palm down in a big arc and up back, outstretched beyond left shoulder, palm up, accompanied by a turn left of the body with right arm bending at the elbow to press down with palm close to left ribs.
Step forward to right in direction of 3 on the clock and brush the right palm across the body to finish outside the right thigh, palm down, fingers pointing ahead, while left palm makes a fist and punches down past ear/jaw making the target of the punch the groin of an imaginary opponent - that level. As you do this Form, shift the weight on to the right leg and lean forward so that rear left leg, back and neck/head make one line (Figure 32).

**White Snake Puts Out Tongue**

Weight shifts on to left foot and toes of right are raised, heel on ground; right palm up, thrusting ahead and lifting level with the base of the neck; left fist rises with elbow bent oblique to, and forward of, left jaw (Figure 33).
Turn whole body to your left, turning the right toes in as far as you can and letting your arms travel with the body turn, up slightly past your eyes. As you make this whole body turn, through 180 degrees, shift weight on to the right foot and turn the left foot so that you face 9 on the clock. Arms continue to turn left with the body turn, the left arm finishing, palm facing up, beside the left hip, and the right palm thrusting forward ahead of the right shoulder, palm down, slightly raised at the wrist.
Weight finally shifts back on to the left foot and the right knee moves in close taking some of the weight, tucked inside the left lower leg or calf muscle, heel raised (Figure 34).

Shift all the weight on to the left foot and raise right clear of ground, toes pointing down, turning body to the left and lifting left palm with open bent arm beside left shoulder, palm in, while right palm makes a small circle to move into a horizontal position.

As you turn your body back to the right, step forward with the right foot, sole flat, toes turned out a little and push forward with left palm, vertical, as you draw right palm, upward facing, back to your right hip, raising left heel from ground, toes touching.

**Pat Foot to Tame Tiger**

(This is a long Form to describe so as you follow it simply treat it as several Forms in terms of how you absorb it, to avoid a sense of over complication.)

Bring the left foot forward resting heel only on the ground, taking the right palm backward and upward in a big arc to finish just behind the right ear; left palm pulls back ahead of left hip, downward facing, arm almost straight.

Weight shifts on to the left foot and right foot makes a head-high toe-kick, straight ahead; right hand sweeps forward, palm down, to slap the ankle/foot of the right leg and left palm sweeps backward and upward in a big arc, ending just behind head, palm out, elbow slightly bent (Figure 35).
Bring the right foot back down beside left, but on the outside of it and as soon as it rests flat on the ground you lift the left foot - a quick exchange; right palm pulls back fractionally, vertical, facing away from face and left palm comes forward in front of chest, downward facing (Figure 36).

Swivel towards 6 on the clock and step towards 4/5 with the left foot, bringing both arms down, fists clenched, past the abdomen, left finishing shoulder height towards your left front corner and right in front of your abdomen, palms face down.

Weight mainly on left foot.
Trunk turns to the right, and head looks right, left elbow bending to bring the fist close to the forehead and right fist rising to left upper chest (Figure 37).

Weight shifts on to the right leg and left foot turns in, right, as you bring your left palm, upward facing, in front of your chest, and right palm, downward facing, pushes across your left forearm.

Weight shifts on to left foot and right palm thrusts out ahead of right shoulder, palm down and bent slightly upwards while left palm pulls back to left hip, upward facing.

Bring the right foot in an arc to the left instep and then step towards 3 on the clock, putting weight on to it. Left palm travels down, back, up and forward in an arc to finish high, just above head and in front of it, while right palm makes an arc back to the right hip, palm up.

Kick forward, upward to head height with left foot, slapping ankle/foot with left downward palm and swinging right palm back, up and out to side, head height, palm outward facing. As before but reversed.

Bring left foot down beside right but on outside of it and as before immediately lift right foot; left palm making a small arc to face almost down and right palm coming forward in front of chest, almost downward facing.

Turn body right towards 1/2 on the clock and step in same direction with right foot, shifting weight on to it. As before swing both palms, in fist formation, low past the abdomen so that right fist ends obliquely forward on right side of shoulder and left below it, to left of right elbow, palms downward facing.

Finish by bringing right fist close to right side of the forehead and left fist to upper part of right chest, turning head to look left.

**Turn Left and Strike**
Weight shifts on to left leg as body turns to left, right toes rise and foot begins to turn in, fists opening and drawing closer to front of chest, where they cross, right palm up and left down.

Left palm continues to cross right forearm and as body turns further left it pushes out to left side, level with left shoulder, and right palm descends in front of right hip (Figure 38); weight shifts on to right foot, now pointing ahead.

Bring left foot close to right as you turn body slightly left then right, bringing left palm down into a fist in front of abdomen and circling right arm in a big curve, back, up, over and down to rest palm on left forearm.

Step towards 7/8 on the clock with left foot and shift weight on to it, as you strike up and forward with left fist, palm facing body; right palm follows attached to left forearm.

Toes of left foot rise as weight shifts to right leg, and left open palm draws back and out to side of left shoulder and right palm thrusts forward; trunk turns left.

As weight shifts to left leg step forward with right leg beside it bringing right palm across in front of the face, fist clenched and left palm down and across in front of abdomen, also in a fist. Palms close into fists gradually and end with fists facing body (Figure 39).

Slowly squat down on the left leg and slide the right foot towards 10 on the clock until it is almost straight. (Take care with this movement; to begin with squat down only a few inches and be aware of your lower back, sacral region; do not force this posture.) At the same time the right arm descends and the left fist threads across it, outside it, and upwards.

Push right fist out along line of right leg as body turns a little right and draw left fist up higher behind left side of head (Figure 40).
Ward Off Standing On One Leg

(Begin this next Form with care to avoid any excess strain on the right knee.) Shift weight on to right leg, turning toes out and lift the right fist as you lower the left fist so that they are both level with one another; both fists continue to have palms facing same direction as before.

Shift weight completely on to right leg and raise left heel as you circle the open right palm inward and back to 'point' forward again, palm down; left fist opens, presses down to waist level and moves forward close to right elbow, twisting inwards (Figure 41).

Continue by raising left knee so thigh is horizontal but lower leg turns inward a little so that sole of foot turns to angle of 45 degrees to ground, raising the left palm, facing away from body, in front of forehead and lowering right palm, facing inside of left calf muscle (Figure 42).

Step forward with the left foot, heel down first, turning body to the left and pushing higher with left palm and drawing right palm towards right hip. (Remember that the body moves as a whole and arm movements in particular can be seen as results, in a sense, of body/leg movements, rather than as independent, isolated actions.) (Figure 43.)

Shift weight on to left leg, flat sole, and raise right heel, lowering left palm ahead of left shoulder and pushing right palm a little forward as body turns front again.
Raise right knee, horizontal thigh, bringing right palm up and back above the head, palm upwards facing and fingers pointing across to left, while left palm lowers to inside of right knee.

**Right Single Whip**

Lower right foot and step backwards with it, keeping most weight still on left leg, bringing right palm out to the right, forward and down in an arc to the front, raising left palm to shoulder level (Figure 44).

Weight shifts back on to right leg, body turns right; keep left sole flat and lower both hands to hip level.

Bend left elbow to raise palm up and in, inward facing in front of chest, and raise right palm to rest on left wrist.

Weight shifts back to left leg, body turning towards 9 on clock, and both palms press forwards to 9, vertical, facing face.

As weight shifts on to right leg, raise left toes and circle left palm to left and bend wrist back.

Shift weight on to left foot, body turning right and left toes turning right at same time; raise right heel and bend left wrist down so that fingers and thumb meet to form a hook or beak and send left arm out just rising above horizontal to your left.

Step towards 3 on the clock face with right foot, shifting weight on to it, and push out ahead of face with right palm (Figure 45).

**Wave Hands Like Clouds**
(In this Form you move along a straight line to the right, trunk turning right and left.)
Shift weight to the left leg and lower right palm down then up facing body, opposite left armpit.
Open left hook/beak palm to face away from body, palm vertical and draw right palm slightly up and across body to right, turning trunk a little to the left.
Shift weight on to right leg, right arm continuing to arc to above right shoulder, arm bent at elbow and palm facing body, as left palm lowers in front of abdomen, palm facing body (Figure 46).
(Though feet move closer together and then apart they remain parallel to one another pointing towards 12 on the clock.)

Bring left foot closer to right, below left hip joint, pushing right hand out to the right, palm turning away from body and left palm rising to right armpit, facing body. Turn head to look right (Figure 47).
Shift weight on to left leg as your body and head turn 180 degrees left to look left, bringing left palm up past face and out to left side of face and taking right palm, inward facing, in a big arc down across lower abdomen and up towards left armpit.
Step out to right with right leg and push palms further left, facing left, accompanied by trunk left turn.
Weight shifts to right leg as left arm descends and right arm rises to push out right once more. Then bring left foot close to right again and repeat the same movements to push out left with palms. Step right again finishing the leftward push, then shift weight on to right foot.
To complete this Form, push once more out to the right and bring the left foot to the right foot again.
(In this Form there are five pushes: right, left, right, left, right.)

Part Wild Horse Mane
As weight shifts on to the left leg, both palms pull in to the right side of the body as if holding a ball - left palm level with left shoulder and right palm level with left hip.
Step out right with right foot towards 3 on clock face and shift weight on to it, flat sole, raising right palm, upward facing, level with right shoulder and lowering left palm, downward facing, level with left hip (Figure 48).
Shift weight on to left leg and raise right toes, turning right foot about 45 degrees to right, turning body with it, and holding a big ball in front of body as you step up with the left foot, heel raised, and shift weight on to flat right foot, and turn body back towards 3.
Step forward with left foot towards 3 and flat sole as weight shifts on to it. Raise left palm and lower right palm as in previous Form. (The Form is the same, done on the left side.)

Fig. 48

High Pat On Horse

Draw the right foot up just to the side of, and behind, the left - left heel raised, and turn left palm into an upward facing position with a gentle circular action, raising right palm to face down, beside right shoulder (Figure 49).

Shift weight on to right foot, lowering heel, and take a small step forward with left foot, turning trunk first right then left as you do so; bring left palm down, facing up, to side of left thigh, and push forward with right palm ahead of right shoulder, palm down sloping at an angle of about 45 degrees to the vertical (Figure 50).
(Note: the angles of foot, trunk, palm, and so forth are all approximate and will vary with the build of the student, preferences of the teacher and so on.)

Fig. 49

Kick With Right Heel
Raise the left heel and bring right palm back to right shoulder as you push left palm downward facing ahead and turn body a little to left.
Step with left heel towards 1/2 on the clock and bring right palm forward turning left palm to face it.
Weight shifts on to left leg as right palm moves up and down, palm outward facing, to the right, level with shoulder, and left palm moves down and up to the left, level with left shoulder, outward facing (Figure 51).
Bring right foot close to left, heel raised, and cross both arms in front of chest, palms facing body.
Raise right knee, leg bent, then straighten leg to kick horizontally forward with right heel, sending both palms out to the sides.

**Strike With Both Fists**

Lower right leg, thigh horizontal, and bring both palms down alongside right thigh, upward facing.
Step down with right foot towards 5 on clock and lower both palms level with hips.
Form fists with both palms as you shift weight on to the right foot, bringing both fists up, out and round as though to strike someone on the ears simultaneously with both fists, using the thumb edges and first knuckles (Figure 52).

**Kick With Left Heel**

Weight shifts on to left leg and right toes rise as palms push up and down in a slight curve to the sides of the body, turning body towards 3 on clock.
Shift weight back to right leg drawing left foot close to it, heel raised, and bring both palms, inward facing in front of body, left palm just ahead of right, arms slightly bent.
Raise left thigh parallel to ground and kick upward with left heel, pushing arms out to the sides, palms facing outward.
Punch With Concealed Fist

Lower left foot beside right, toes only touching ground, and bring both palms in front of face, left open and right making a fist (Figure 53). Step towards 1/2 on the clock with the left foot and turn body to the right as you lower both fists level with the right hip, both palms up and right fist resting in palm of left hand. Weight shifts on to left leg as right fist punches forward to abdomen level and left palm draws back to left hip, making a fist, palm up.

Needle At Sea Bottom

Weight stays on left leg as right foot makes a half pace towards left foot, heel raised, right palm open, inward facing, coming back in front of right thigh and left palm, open, downward facing, pushes forward in front of chest. Weight shifts on to right leg and left heel is raised as right palm curves back, up and forward in front of right shoulder and left palm curves out and down above left knee, body turning with the palms to the right. Slide left toes a few inches forward and turn body to front again, drawing left palm to side of left hip joint and thrusting right palm down in a 45 degree angle to vertical, leaning trunk a little forward from hips (Figure 54).

Fan Penetrates Back (Flash the Arm)
Raise left foot just below right knee level and bring right hand back closer to the body, pushing left palm forward and across to face in, just back from right wrist. Take a deep step forward with left foot and push left arm straight ahead, palm in and bent up at the wrist, drawing right palm, outward facing, to the side of the right temple and forehead (Figure 55).

**Kick With Right and Left Feet**

Turn the right foot, while it is still bearing little weight, round to 6 on the clock, and shift weight on to it, turning the trunk in the same direction and in the same movement turning the left foot in the same direction: right turns out, left turns in. As you do so push both palms out to the side, facing away from the body. Look right. Weight is mainly on the right foot. Weight shifts on to left leg and at same time turns left toes a little to the right, drawing right foot close to left, heel raised; turning trunk to the right bring both palms down in arcs, across the body and up to cross in front of the chest, facing in, right furthest from body. Turn both palms away from the body and push right palm straight ahead, almost straight arm, and push left palm out to the side, shoulder level, as you lift right thigh and kick upwards with toe (Figure 56). Lower the right foot by bending the knee then stepping out towards 10 on the clock, heel only touching, and draw right palm back a little, turning palm in, as left palm pushes down past left hip and up to face inside of right forearm. Shift weight on to right flat foot and push left palm out towards 9 on the clock sending right palm back and to the side, palm out, shoulder level, looking towards 9. Left foot comes forward beside right, heel raised, arms cross as before but left furthest from body, then separate the arms and kick up with left toe as before.

**Brush Left and Right Knees**
Lower the left leg by bending the knee and place foot close to right, heel raised; right arm bending, and palm coming in to face the eyes as head turns towards it, left palm drawing back towards and down the body to rest, downward facing, at waist level. Step towards 9 with the left foot and shift weight on to it, bringing left palm forward and across the body to 'brush' above left knee and stop on outside of thigh, fingers pointing front, while right palm pushes forward at chin level towards 9, body and head turning in same direction.

Weight shifts back on to right foot and left toes rise and turn a little to the left, as left palm makes a little scooping action, face upwards, and right arm begins to bend at the elbow bringing right palm back towards the face.

Raise the left palm and turn head to look at it as you shift weight on to left flat foot, right foot coming close to and slightly ahead of left, heel raised. Whole body follows the head turn left, and right palm, facing down, lowers to level with waist. Step straight towards 9 with the right foot, 'brush' the right knee and push forward as before, this time with left palm (Figure 57).

**Step Up and Punch**

Weight shifts back on to left foot and right toes are raised as left palm draws back a little closer to the body, palm up, and right palm pushes across left forearm, palm down.

Right toes turn a little to the right and weight shifts on to right foot as right palm pushes diagonally forward right, facing away, and left palm curves right and then left in front of waist.

Step forward on to left heel, pushing left palm up and forward left, slowly making a fist, palm inward facing, and drawing right palm back to right hip, palm up, also making a fist.

Weight shifts on to left flat foot and right fist, inward facing, punches forward and up in front of face while left fist comes back, turning in a little, palm down, resting under the right wrist (Figure 58).

**As if Closing a Door**
Step forward with right foot, heel raised, just behind and to side of left, and open both palms, turning them upwards and slightly bent upwards at the wrists (Figure 59). Take a short step forward with left foot as you shift weight on to right, and draw palms back towards body, inward facing, then stretch out left leg to touch ground with heel, and push down with both palms towards abdomen, and then forward, palms facing away from body, as you shift weight fully on to flat left foot.

**Wave Hands Like Clouds**

This is a repeat of the earlier move, moving left instead of right. Turn right foot a little to the right and trunk with it, slowly shifting weight on to right leg, and turning left toes in to run parallel with right foot; right arm curves slightly up and down, away to the right, palm facing away from body, and left palm drops to the right, scooping up to lie at waist height almost below right elbow. Bring weight slowly on to left foot, and draw left palm up across chest to stand to the left of the head, palm facing face as you look at it, and right arm coming down across abdomen and scooping up almost below left elbow. Bring right foot closer to left, turn left palm away from face, and straighten left elbow a little and begin to bring right palm back towards its previous position. Take both palms back across to the first position, turning trunk and head as before and shift weight on to right leg. Step left with no weight on left foot and begin to bring arms back to second position as before. Shift weight on to left leg and complete the movement to the left; then repeat the whole movement turning to the right again; then complete it once more to the left.

**Turn Right and Strike**
Step diagonally backwards towards 5 with the left leg and bend the right with weight on it, lowering and turning the left palm up in front of the waist and pushing the right palm, downward facing, across the left forearm and out at chin height towards 10. Weight shifts back on to left leg; raise right heel, turning the trunk to the left and looking towards 9. Bring right palm back in a fist, palm facing body, in front of the waist, and left palm moves down, back, up and down once more in a circle to finish behind the right forearm, palm down.

Step towards 10 with the right foot and punch upward and forward in same direction with right fist (an uppercut), while left palm follows the right forearm without losing position (Figure 60).

Fair Lady Works With Shuttles

Weight shifts on to left leg; raise right toes and open right fist into a palm inward facing; then shift weight on to right foot, flat, trunk turning to face 10 on the clock, left palm pushing out in front of body at shoulder height and right palm going down and up to cover left inner elbow.

Bring left foot close up beside right, toes only touching, drawing left palm, oblique to the ground, in front of abdomen, and right palm, upward facing, to the right hip (Figure 61).

Step towards 7 with left foot, flat, and shift weight on to it, while turning left forearm so that palm faces towards body, at neck height, and right palm fingers rest near the wrist of the left arm (Figure 62).
Draw right foot up behind and to the side of the left, toes touching, and move both arms to the left, lowering the left elbow.
Settle weight back on to right foot, flat, and step forward a few inches on to left toes, turning body right, and bringing right palm, inward facing, to the right lower ribs, and bringing left palm round at head height, palm inward facing.
Step towards 7 with left foot, flat, and turn body towards 9, pushing straight ahead with right vertical palm and pulling left palm, facing 9, just above forehead (Figure 63).

Weight shifts on to right leg, and left toes lift to leave heel on ground, drawing left palm forward and in front of chest, slightly bent, and pushing; right palm pulls back to push across top of left forearm, palm facing left forearm.
Shift weight on to left foot, flat, bringing left palm down, upward facing, in front of left lower ribs, and turning right palm, facing out, at shoulder height, to right front side of body; body turns right with it (Figure 64).
Weight stays on left foot as right foot, toes touching, comes up close to left instep, and left palm draws back to left hip, and right palm draws back to press down in front of abdomen.
Step towards 10 with right foot, flat, (this is same movement done on the other side), and push right arm ahead of right shoulder turning palm almost flat, while left palm fingers rest on inside of right wrist, and shift weight on to right foot.
Bring left foot close to right instep, toes touching, and draw both arms towards right rear, turning body right and lowering right elbow.
Settle weight back on to left foot, raising right heel, and turn right palm upwards near right temple while left palm pushes up in front of face.
Step towards 10 with right foot, flat, and shift weight on to it, turning body right further and finishing with right palm just above forehead and left palm pushing further ahead of the face, palm facing away from face.

Step Back With Cross-over Palm

Weight shifts on to left leg and right toes lift, heel on ground. Bring left palm down in an arc to the left hip, palm down, and right arm goes forward at shoulder level, palm inward facing, arm almost straight.
Step back with right foot and keep weight on left foot as you push the right palm forward and upward, upward facing, ahead of the face and bring the right arm down and across in a fist to rest under the left elbow.

Press Down Palms With Empty Step
Weight shifts on to right leg and left foot turns in to bring body facing towards 2 on the clock as the right palm is drawn back in front of the lower chest and the left palm comes up to face the left side of the temple/forehead. Weight shifts on to right leg as right foot turns in and left foot turns out, heel raised; simultaneously the left palm descends to just above the right knee, palm down, fingers pointing across, and right palm pulls back towards right hip. Facing 3 on the clock (Figure 65).

**Stand On One Leg Holding Out Palm**

Raise the right knee, thigh parallel to ground, lower leg straight down with toes pointing down as left palm draws back to the side of the left chest level with shoulder and right palm extends ahead of body, palm upward facing; body turning a little to the left (Figure 66).

**Push Forearm With Horse Stance**
Weight follows right leg as you step down towards 5 with that leg, foot flat, turning body to the right and raising the left heel, toes touching. The right palm turns to face down and draws back just ahead of right hip as left palm extends ahead of left shoulder, palm in a vertical plane facing inwards. Weight remains on right leg as left foot is brought up beside it, toes only touching, and torso turns far round to the right so that eyes can look back at right palm which turns upward facing, going back, down and up in an arc beyond the right shoulder with the left palm making a fist and descending level with the waist, palm down.

Step towards 2 with left foot, shifting half of weight on to it in the Horse Riding Stance (Figure 67) and turn trunk towards 3. Left fist is pushed down and forward above left knee by the right palm which comes down and rests, palm down, on the left forearm.

![Fig 67](image)

**Turn Body With Large Strokes**

Weight shifts on to right leg, raising left toes, and both palms open, and turn to face right with right body turn.

Turn left foot towards 2, lowering sole flat on ground, and shift weight on to it, as left palm rises, arm almost completely bent, palm twisting out to face left; right arm extends almost straight, ahead of right shoulder, palm up. Then bring right foot up to left, as if feet are standing to attention and raise right palm a couple of inches higher (Figures 68 and 69).

Turn body about 90 degrees right, using right foot to pivot, then sit down on right foot with left foot, heel raised, resting slightly ahead of right; right palm rises, facing inwards, ahead of right temple, arm half bent, and left arm straightens a little, but still bent, so that left palm faces diagonally downwards and inwards ahead of left shoulder. Left foot steps backwards leaving weight on right leg, and right palm moves away from the body towards 11, palm up and turned inward, with left palm descending just behind right elbow, palm down (Figure 70).

Turn left toes to the left and shift weight on to left leg turning right foot inwards to the left using the ball of the foot as a pivot; turn trunk right round to the left in line with left foot and bring left palm, slowly making a fist, round to the left hip, palm facing upward; note that left elbow is held a few inches away from the body so that forearm/fist is pointing inwards. At the same time the right palm slowly makes a fist, and, synchronizing with the body turn, travels past the face, descends in an arc beyond the left ribs and back across the body to the right side, arm bent at the elbow so that the fist is held at solar plexus height, palm up (Figure 71: 72 reverse view). Figure 72 is the view of Figure 71 from the back.
Swinging Palms and Crouching Step (Single Whip Squatting Down)
Shift weight on to right leg turning trunk a little to the right and raising the right fist level with the forehead, palm down, as left fist pushes down and back below and behind left hip (Figure 73). Left foot turns towards 5 on clock and weight shifts on to left leg as both palms open, left rising to solar plexus level, palm facing body, elbow bent, and right palm is lowered to outside of right thigh, gradually turning to face inwards (left). Bring right foot, toes only touching, beside left foot, continuing with right palm movement inwards to finish in front of lower abdomen, palm obliquely downwards, and left palm coming in and across body to rest fingers on lower right forearm. Weight moves on to right leg and torso turns to the right (Figure 74) as the left knee is raised, thigh parallel to ground and lower leg vertical; both arms move right, left fingers still 'attached' to right forearm, as right arm opens and extends to the right to form a hook/beak. Extend the left leg towards 2 to place left foot flat on ground (Figure 75) and bend right leg into a crouching, squatting or sitting down position (exercising caution over depth of knee bend to avoid excessive strain at the knee and sacral region) and then lowering left palm, inward facing, down past the right chest, abdomen, groin and extending it along the inside of the left leg, palm facing inwards (Figure 76).

**Step Up and Cross Fists**
(This move comes from the Yang-style move called Step Up To Form The Seven Stars, but here the position of the right foot has been changed.)
Rise up (carefully) to put weight on to left leg and push left palm up and forward, arm almost extended, facing inward, and draw right palm forward down and back behind right hip, in an arc, fingers still in hook/beak position, palm facing backwards (Figure 77).
Bring right foot forward to rest on ball of foot ahead of left foot, at the same time making the left palm into a fist and bringing the right palm forward and upward in a fist so that both fists cross at the wrists in front of the chest, arms slightly bent, left fist on top and palms down.

Fig. 77

**Stand On One Leg To Ride The Tiger**

Bringing the right foot back one step, shift the weight on to it and bring the left open palm across the front at chin height, palm inwards facing, vertical, drawing right open palm, downwards facing, back to the right hip.
Shift body weight firmly on to right leg as body turns to face 3 and left foot slides a little closer to the right, heel raised, as the left palm draws back to left hip, facing down, and right palm makes a big arc, up, across and down body from right to left, to finish, palm up, above left thigh (Figure 78).

Fig. 78
Raise left foot, toes pointing a little inwards, as right palm pushes upward and forward in front of right shoulder and left palm goes back, down, up and sideways in a hook/beak (Figure 79).

**Sweep Lotus With Leg**

Combine the descending weight of the left leg, the rotation of the arms and shoulders to the right, and the turning of the trunk to the right, to bring the left foot across to step to the right of the right foot. The extended left palm, inward facing, helps this action as the right palm pulls down to the right hip, upward facing. Trunk is now facing 5 on clock (Figure 80). (This movement may be difficult at first; if so, compromise by turning less far to the right until your joints and balance improve.)

Turn further right on the balls of both feet, round to 9, thrusting the left palm, inward facing, diagonally downward and upward in front of the face, and 'cupping' the left elbow with the open right palm -not touching (Figure 81).

Without pausing, the body continues to turn right on the balls of both feet so that you face 12 on the clock and the right palm rises past and close to the face to push out right towards 3, followed by the left palm which presses down, inward facing, in front of the right ribs (Figure 82).

(The next movement is difficult to describe clearly but with experiment you will grasp it.) The trunk turns a little to the right and back again left to face 12. This small torso twist is brought about by raising the right foot to the left and up in an arc so that it swings back to the right at about shoulder level (or lower depending on flexibility). At the same time, both palms swing in unison from right to left, in
Bend The Bow To Shoot The Tiger

As you complete the swing with the arms in the previous Form, you lower the right leg to the position shown in Figure 84 so that the thigh is horizontal, lower leg vertical, and turn the trunk towards 2 on the clock, pushing the left palm out to your right at shoulder height and pressing down with the right palm just in front of the right ribs, palm obliquely down.

Slowly lower both palms, downward facing, and bring them across the body at waist height as you lower the right leg towards 4, only the heel resting on the ground.

Flatten the right foot and shift weight on to it, toes pointing to 4, and turn the torso in the same direction, bringing both palms, slowly forming fists, in a downward and upward arc to the right side of the body. Both fists are almost at the same height, right slightly higher, palms down. Imagine you are grasping the ends of a small bow. Look right towards the right fist (Figure 85).

Turn the trunk towards 3 and twist both fists inward and outward as if bending the bow, sending the right fist a little further out to the right and upward and the left fist out to the left and forward. Look front (Figure 86).
Strike, Parry and Punch

Weight shifts back on to left leg and right toes rise as the left fist opens into a palm, facing body diagonally upward, with right fist opening at the same time, palm approaching and facing left elbow.

Lower right toes to the ground, turning them inward as you do so, and draw left palm back to left hip, pushing right palm away at shoulder height and turning trunk to the left.

Bring right foot, heel raised, close to left foot, bringing right palm back and down in an arc, fist clenched, palm down, in front of abdomen, while left palm rises, palm down, in front of the chest and body turns back to the right.

Right foot steps forward on to the heel, toes out, as right fist rises and strikes forward in front of the chest, palm up, and left palm presses down in front of left hip.

Weight shifts on to the right leg and torso turns right. Left foot steps forward on to the left heel as the left palm pushes forward in front of the left shoulder and right fist draws back to the right hip, palm facing upward.

Weight shifts on to the left foot, flat, and the right fist punches forward to shoulder height as the left open palm returns to touch the inside of the right forearm. Look ahead.

Ward Off, Roll Back, Press and Push Right

This sequence is a repetition of the Form done early in the Set, except that it is done on the right instead of the left. As an interesting exercise, see if you can work it out for yourself, referring to the instructions on page 52.

Crossing Hands
Weight shifts on to the left foot, and body turns to face 12, as you move from the push position in the previous Form. Left toes turn right as the weight changes. At the same time turn the right toes to the left as the weight changes (Figure 87). The left palm follows the leftward turn of the body and the right palm remains extended to the right from the previous Form.

Shift weight a little on to the right foot and turn the left toes further right to point towards 10 then lower the weight on to the left leg, straightening the right leg and pushing the left palm further left, looking at the left hand (Figure 88). Weight shifts on to the right leg and the left toes turn inwards so that both feet are parallel facing 12. Bring both palms down across the body and cross them in front of the chest, facing inwards, elbows down a little, so that the cross is made to the right side of the chest. Right arm closer to the body. Bring the left foot in to the right, feet hip width apart, and bring the cross to the centre of the chest.

Closing

Turn both palms to face downward and draw them apart. When they reach the armpits turn the fingers to face the front. As the palms press down, straighten the legs - palms downward moving, body upward moving - and bring the palms to the sides of the thighs, fingers pointing down. Left foot joins the right foot. This is the end of the Set.

Legs And Feet Exercises

If you become interested in and appreciative of Tai Chi, you will join the ranks of those people who can find pleasure in little things. You will see the importance and value of little things, and understand that they make all the difference. This echoes the old English proverb-poem:
For the want of a nail a horse shoe was lost  
For the want of a horse shoe a horse was lost  
For the want of a horse a rider was lost  
For the want of a rider a message was lost  
For the want of a message a battle was lost  
For the want of a battle a kingdom was lost  
And all for the want of a nail . . .

If you bear this old proverb in mind it will help you to become interested in your feet. Everything else is above the feet; they are the mobile foundations of your body. One Chinese belief places a man or woman's head as the equivalent of Heaven, the hands the equivalent of Earth, and the feet as the equivalent of Man. Though Heaven is higher it depends on Earth. Though Earth is higher it depends on Man.

Observe your own naked foot and note that the inside edge, the instep, is an arch. The inside edge of the foot, the arch, is designed to be raised. It follows from this that any tendency for the ankle joint to bend inwards is contrary to the design of the foot.

1. Stand upright as you usually do and notice whether your ankle joints have a tendency to fall inwards. This is the case with many people. If they do, push your weight more towards the outside edges of your feet - release - push out - release. Keep your knees slightly bent. Except as an intentional exercise, never lock your knees back because it throws out the alignment of your spine. If you become tired, sit down, but do not follow any inclination to lock the knees to 'rest'.

2. Imagine that you are standing on railway lines. The lines are the same width apart as the distance between your hips. Imagine also that there is a pencil line drawn from the middle of your heel, along the middle of your foot, ending in the middle of the spread of your toes. Put your heel down in front of you to make a step, as though you were aiming to place the start of the pencil line down exactly in the middle of the right-hand railway line. Bend your toes upwards as you place your heel down, then as you settle the sole of the foot on to the ground, you 'roll' your foot out, as though it were a piece of rolled up carpet, so that your foot is completely flat. Your shin bone is vertical above your foot and your ankle bone is straight. Step forward with the other foot in the same way and continue to the limit of your space, turn round and go back.

At first you may have to bend forward to look at your feet to see what is going on, but with training you will be able to sense what is going on with the feet and legs and stand upright. If your ankles habitually fall inwards this new use of the feet will feel strange and you will notice new muscular actions in the lower leg. An interesting thing to do is to examine the soles of your shoes; where they are more worn away are obviously the areas which come in for most weight bearing and this can also tell you something about your usual way of walking and standing.

As you walk forwards in the above fashion, vary the angle of your foot. Sometimes turn your toes out, and at other times keep them straight in line with your heels. If you are still not sure about the exercise, try it without your
shoes on. Do not overly tense your feet to produce the rolling down carpet action. Find just what force is needed.

3. Still stand on the railway lines. Take one pace forward and bend your front knee. Keep your rear leg extended but slightly bent at the knee. The front toes point forward and the rear foot is turned out about 45 degrees. This is an approximation of the most widely used stance or leg position in Tai Chi. It is called the Bow stance or sometimes the Bow and Arrow stance. The front leg is bent like a bow and the rear leg is stretched like the bow string. But not taut. It is an approximation because there are a number of finer points which need to be followed before it becomes accurate. Keep your shin bone in the front leg in line with your foot; that is, the ankle joint is in the vertical plane. The front knee does not extend beyond the front toes. The thigh bone of the rear leg is of course at an angle to the pelvis, at the thigh joint, and the pelvis is as near vertical as anatomy permits. You have a feeling of partially 'sitting down' on the rear leg. Your trunk is upright.

Try slowly shifting your weight back and forth from rear leg to front leg. When your weight is more centred over the rear leg this is called the Back stance or Rear stance, and this too is a common position in Tai Chi.

Now, shift your weight once more from Bow to Rear stance and as you go into Rear stance raise the toes of the front foot so that only the heel rests on the ground. With your feet in this position, try turning the toes of the foot inwards or outwards some 45 degrees and put the sole of the foot on the ground. These few manoeuvres are used a lot in Tai Chi and to practise them in advance will prepare you well for moving about in the Forms.

4. Take the Rear stance again with the right foot in front, toes raised. Turn the toes in 45 degrees and put the foot down flat. Now, shift your weight on to that foot, turn your pelvis a little and put most of your weight on the turned in foot. This is the Turned In stance. Still in the Turned In stance, lift the heel of the non-weight-bearing foot, the left, so that only the ball of the foot is on the ground. Turn that foot on its ball, to the left, then step diagonally left with it, so that it points in the opposite direction to the one you were in when you began this manoeuvre. Shift your weight slowly on to it and as you do so, turn the rear right foot in so that it is at an angle of 45 degrees or so to the direction in which you are facing.

This sounds complicated but it isn't. Follow the instructions one at a time and you will find yourself once more in a Bow stance, left foot leading. Try this move often, experiencing the rotation as you turn your feet in. Once you can do it smoothly you will be able to make most of the transitions of the Tai Chi Forms quite easily. Do it starting from a right and left Rear stance.

5. You are once more on the railway lines. The image of the lines is merely a device to get you to keep your legs the width of your hips apart as you move. Once you can do this you can forget all about the image. Years of experience of teaching Tai Chi have shown me that this is one of the most difficult things for a beginner to remember. Stand in a right Bow stance. You are about to travel forwards in a different way from usual. Move into a Rear stance and turn your right toes out 45 degrees, placing the sole on the ground. Shift your weight on to this leg and bring the left foot close beside it, ball of the foot on the ground and heel raised, so that the ball of the foot is beside the right instep. Your body faces the same direction as your right leg. Then step forward into a left Bow stance, so that your body faces once more in the first, starting direction. Shift back into a Rear stance, turn the left
foot out 45 degrees, put the sole down, bring up the right foot beside the left instep as before and step into a right Bow stance. The order is:

- Right Bow stance
- Right Rear stance
- Raise the right toes and turn out 45 degrees and put sole on ground
- Shift weight on to right foot and bring left foot beside it
- Step into a left Bow stance, heel down first and 'rolling' out the foot
- Repeat on the left side.

This mode of travel is the most common in Tai Chi. There are variations but once you can be familiar with this stance series and stepping action you will be able to follow the Forms with more confidence. The next two exercises are to help you to slow down, inside yourself. One is an exercise I produced myself and the other comes from the training of Kyudo students. Kyudo is the Japanese form of ritualized archery. If you study them carefully you will acquire slowness and patience; very necessary in Tai Chi.

6. Stand with feet apart and parallel to one another. Take a full step forward with the right foot. Shift your weight on to it slowly. Bring up the left foot beside the right, parallel to it and 2 or 3 inches (5 to 8 centimeters) away to the side. It stops so that the tip of the left toes is opposite the middle of the right instep; no further. Most weight remains on the right foot. Pause for a second then slide the left foot so that the toes are in line with the right toes. Weight remains on the right foot. Slide the left foot a full foot's length ahead of the right foot and shift the weight on to it. Bring the right toes half way along to stop opposite the middle of the left instep. Pause a second. Slide the right foot so that the toes are in line with the left toes. Pause. Slide the right foot a full foot's length ahead of the left foot. Pause. Begin again.

- Full pace right - left toes half way along instep - left toes in line with right toes - left foot a full foot's length ahead - repeat on left side. Pause one second at least between each movement of the foot. The opening full pace with the right foot is not repeated.

When you move your foot, do so slowly and attentively, keeping your body relaxed. It is likely you will feel impatient with the exercise. Ignore this and continue for at least five minutes until you feel reconciled with the speed and action of the movement.
7. Stand with your feet apart and parallel to one another. Take a full step forward along the railway lines with the left foot, putting only the heel down. At this point all your weight is on the right foot. The left heel supports only the weight of the leg itself. Your left shin and ankle muscles are contracted to raise your toes; not a strong contraction, just enough to keep the foot in position. Slowly and with a firm intention relax your shin and ankle muscles to lower the sole of the left foot to the ground. The entire weight is still on the right leg. Most students, when they begin to learn this exercise, tend to shift the weight forward on to the left foot as the sole of the foot is lowered. Do not do this. Only when the sole is fully lowered do you slowly shift weight on to the left foot. Feel the muscles of leg and foot begin to contract to support the weight and find balance. Relax the right leg as the left takes the weight and raise the right heel so that only the ball of the right foot rests on the ground. Repeat the exercise with the right foot in front.

A key point from an anatomical point of view in this exercise is that when you lower your front sole on to the ground you bend your rear supporting knee a little. If you do not do this you will have to stretch your front leg and this will upset things. Another point worth emphasizing is that when you lower the sole on to the ground you relax the shin muscle and ankle as much as you possibly can.

This exercise has been tried and tested. It is very beneficial. After five to ten minutes of its correct execution the legs begin to feel warm and relaxed as the additional blood and nerve circulation, the chi circulation if you will, builds up. This can extend to the upper legs and lower half of the torso as well. It is an excellent adjunct to Tai Chi training.

You should now, after the last two chapters, be able to devise variations on the different exercises presented. This will be helped if the exercises have done something to stimulate your interest in how your body works and to show you that moving more slowly than usual can produce a different kind of perception. With application you may come to accept this different perception and the benefits which it can bring.