

Taijiquan

Thirty Seven Posture Yang Short Form

First Section

First section

1. Preparation

- Begin with the heels together, legs straightened but the knees are not locked, and with the toes pointing out at 45 degrees to each other. The arms are relaxed and hands by your thighs with all fingertips in contact. The direction you are facing now is regarded as *South* for the duration of the form.
- Begin like the preparation exercise, relax and sink to lower the posture, with the tailbone tucked in as soon as the movement commences. The tailbone remains tucked in throughout the Form. Then relax and sink through the right leg into the ground to transfer all the weight to the right foot. When all the weight has been transferred, the left heel should automatically lift free. Avoid lifting the knee to free the heel.
- Turn out the left heel until the outer edge of the left foot is pointing *South*, then lower the heel to the floor. Then, keep adjusting into your right leg as you glide the left foot out to shoulder width, maintaining the outer edge pointing *South*. The heel and toe should remain in contact with the floor whilst gliding, i.e. the foot is level/flat
- Transfer your bodyweight to the centre between the feet until you have 50% of your weight in each leg.
- Like the #1 relaxing exercise, relax and turn 100% of your weight into the left leg, turning the hips to face the *South West*, whilst simultaneously opening the right hand away from the thigh. The right thumb and forefinger tips remain in contact, but the palm will face *North*. The right foot is still pointing *South West*.
- Release the compression from the left leg to jack the body up and square the hips to the *South*, whilst simultaneously and gradually transferring 50% of your weight into the right foot and turning in the right toes to face *South*. Also, simultaneously open the left palm away from the thigh, leaving the tips of the thumb and forefinger in contact.
- Relax and sink the posture to the fully seated position and sit the wrists
- The posture should now be facing *South*, your feet parallel, the arms forming an arc with the body and the tips of the forefingers and thumbs in contact with the thigh. The wrists/palms are seated and facing behind and slightly out to the *North North East* and *North North West* corners. The seating of the palms is at the same angle as the thigh and the awareness is at the centre of the palms.
- **Finishing position:** The feet are parallel (outer edge of the sole) and shoulder width apart. The ankles, knees and hips are all bent, relaxed and seated. The palms are seated by the thighs with the tips of the thumbs and forefingers in contact with the thigh.

2. Opening the form

- With a small but continuous release of compression from both legs, jack the body up, soften the chest to sink the shoulders (shoulder blades drop down the back) and therefore lift up the arms to the South with a slight tendency towards the centre line. The fingers should remain pointing downwards, wrists relaxed.
- When the wrists are at two thirds body height and the thumbs are one fist width apart, let go in the ankles, knees and hips to lower the body. Soften the chest and sink the shoulders but leave the wrists where they are and do not move the hands. When the body has dropped enough such that the shoulders are the same height as the wrists then the elbows can begin to drop, thus beginning to level the wrists. The hands will look a little like they are being drawn over a ball. The elbows must drop slightly to the side and back, along the existing direction of the forearm, so as to leave a gap between the elbows and the body.
- When the elbows are finished, the wrists are seated as the hands are lowered. At the completion of the movement, the tips of the forefingers and thumbs must be in contact with the thigh, with the palms facing slightly out and behind and the awareness at the centre of the palms, just the same as at the start of the movement.
- Release, pushing both feet into the ground to jack the body up about 1.5-2 inches in height, similar to the #2 exercise. The wrists should relax and straighten.

3. Ward off right

- Start to turn the waist clockwise and simultaneously sink through the left foot and turn in the left toe 15 degrees (or 1 inch). As soon as the left toe has finished, continue to turn the hips and turn out the right toe until the outside edge points *West*. [*Beginners may find this difficult, so at first it is acceptable to first turn in the left toes, then turn the hips and turn out right toes as a separate movement*]. The hips should now be facing *South West*.

The turn should be done smoothly and all the time you should be moving away from the right palm, so it stays in the same place in space. Take care not to lift the right hand/arm.

- Sink, load up and square up to the *West*, 55% weight in your back (left) leg, whilst simultaneously bringing the left hand to the *dan tien*, one palm's width away, palm facing up; and the right hand to breastbone height, palm facing down, elbow relaxed but not collapsed. The hands should be positioned as if they are holding a ball and the right forearm is level, although still relaxed.
- Perform a small release from the back leg, soften the chest, and sink the shoulders to slightly extend the arms.
- **Finishing Position:** The outer edge of the left foot is pointing 15 degrees *West* of *South* and the outer edge of the right foot is pointing due *East*. The heels are in line and the weight is distributed 55% in the

left leg and 45% in the right leg, with the hips facing due *East*. The left palm is level with the dan tien and is facing upwards, while the right palm is level with the breastbone, facing downwards.

4. Ward off left

- Relax the hips vertically down to transfer 80% of the weight into the right leg, without the body's centre line shifting forwards, letting the right heel come off the floor. This is made possible by dropping the left knee and letting go of the hips and thus the left heel will come off the ground. Pay particular attention to letting go of the left hip. If you hold on to the left hip it will keep some of your weight back and will inhibit your ability to perform the turn. Simultaneously the hands will start to change, i.e. the ball will start to get smaller.
- Turn the hips and transfer 100% of the body-weight into the right leg until facing the *South West* and the tailbone is aligned above the heel. The left foot should now be pointing *South*. The hands continue to change throughout the movement and, by the time you are facing the *South West*, the left hand should be at navel height and the right hand about 1.5 to 2 inches below breastbone height.
- Continue to adjust into your right leg as you step to the *South* with the left heel. The left hand continues to rise and the right hand continues to drop. All the weight is still in the right leg.
- Transfer your weight to 50-50, synchronising in both legs and still allowing the hands to change. At the same instant you arrive at 50-50, the left toe should close on the floor, the left knee arrives over the toes and the middle finger of the right hand should be pointing at the centre of the left palm. The hands should now be at abdomen height, with the thumbs still in the centre line.
- Soften and turn the hips anti-clockwise around the central axis to turn in the right toe. When the toe is at 45 degrees the hips should be facing in between the *South West* and the *South*. Drop the hips and the right knee to facilitate continuing the hips turning to the *South* and to create the loading-up. By this point, the left hand should be at breastbone height, palm facing the body, and the right hand at *dan tien* height, palm facing the body. Both thumbs should be in the centre line. Take care when turning the hips to ensure you are turning around the centre-line (a common mistake at this point is to pull the front (left) hip back).
- Release from the back leg. The right hand moves down and outward until the palm is in front of the right thigh and in line with the front of the left thigh, with the wrist seated. The left forearm extends slightly forwards and up to chest height for the ward off left position, keeping the elbow up but not stiff.
- **Finishing Position:** A *South* facing bow stance with the left foot forwards. The left arm is in the ward-off position at chest height with the left wrist very slightly higher than the elbow. The right palm is in front of the right thigh and in line with the front of the left thigh, with the wrist seated.

5. Grasp the Sparrow's Tail

- **Part 1 – Ward off Right.** Relax the hips and sink vertically down to transfer 80% of the weight into the left leg, without the body's centreline shifting forwards, letting the right heel come off the floor, and then make a small turn to the left. As you do so, the left hand starts to turn down slightly with the thumb still in the centreline, and the right hand (thumb) moves to the centreline, protecting the groin, palm facing inwards.
- Spiral the body-weight clockwise into the left leg until the tailbone is aligned above the left heel, the hips are facing *South West* and 100% of the weight is in the left foot. As you do so, the left palm turns to face down and the right hand (arc of the thumb) comes up to chest height, palm facing inwards. The left fingers point at the right wrist. The left middle finger is two finger-widths away from the crease of the right wrist.
- Take a half step out and to the *West* with the right heel, shift the weight and close the toe, to 50-50 weight distribution, with the hips still facing the *South West* corner.
- Use the hips to turn in the left toe 45 degrees, and then load up by dropping the left knee and both hips as you square them to the *West*. During the loading the hands remain at the same height, so that when you have loaded, the tip of the right thumb will be level with the nose.
- Soften the hips and turn to release to the *North West* corner, until the centre of the chest points along a line through your right knee. The release is happening as you turn and is facilitated by sinking the shoulders and dropping the elbows.
- **Part 2 – Rollback.** Soften the hips to square up to the *West*, leaving the right hand where it is. The right hand should therefore be in line with your right shoulder, palm now facing *South*. The left hand should simultaneously start to turn to face you.
- Sit back along the centre line to 90% weight on the back leg, with the front knee 90% straightened, leaving the right hand where it is and continuing to turn the left palm upwards as you draw the left arm in to rollback. The left hand should finish with the thumb at breastbone height, palm facing up. Soften the chest and shoulders, allowing the right hand to move into the centre line and drop to breastbone height (take care not to collapse the right elbow). Simultaneously, the left hand drops into the arc of the hip, with the palm facing up.
- Turn the hips to the *South West* as the left hand draws out of the hip to the *South East* corner, and the right hand follows you round. By the time you have finished the turn, the left hand should be slightly higher than the right, palm facing slightly down. The right palm should be facing slightly up, as if the palms are facing each other but displaced.
- **Part 3 – Press.** Square up to the *West* with a closing intention from the body, drawing in both arms and taking care to remain 90% weighted in the rear (left) leg. The right arm draws in from the shoulder, but be careful not to lock the shoulder up. The left hand should be behind your left ear. Be careful not to collapse the left elbow.

- Move in towards the right hand whilst simultaneously lowering the right arm to turn the palm upwards and bring the left wrist down onto the right wrist. At the same instant you reach 50-50 weight distribution in the legs, the outer edge of the right hand should touch the body and the left arm should touch the right. The hands meet at the soft part of the wrists (base of the thumb and little finger pads), and the elbows are one fist width away from the body.
- Perform press by releasing from the left leg, soften the chest and sink the shoulders to rotate the wrists inwards, until the hands are at shoulder height. The two smallest fingers of the right hand are in contact with the left forearm. The thumb and the first two fingers of the left hand are in contact with the right forearm.
- **Part 4 – Push.** Withdraw away from the hands, keeping the elbows at shoulder level, until you are at 90% back leg. As you withdraw, the left palm runs along the back of the right forearm and the left thumb along the right index finger. The left thumb should break contact at the same instant that you are at 90% back leg.
- Move in towards the hands, letting the chest soften, shoulders sink and elbows drop (but not collapse). The hands should not move forwards as you move in.
- When you reach 50-50, the tips of the thumb, index and middle fingers of each hand should face each other and be one fist distance apart. The arc of the thumbs should be at chest/shoulder level.
- Release from the back leg, soften the chest, sink the shoulders and drop the elbows to extend the hands (very) slightly forwards. Be careful not to drop or raise the hands as you release.

6. Single Whip

- Withdraw away from the hands and let the fingers level out with the wrists.
- Soften the chest and shoulders to allow the elbows to draw in slightly.
- Turn the hips to the left and turn in the right toes until they point *South*. Continue to turn the hips until they face *South South East*. The weight is still mostly in the left leg.
- Continue turning the hips and sink the weight into the right foot, allowing the left heel to turn in, until the hips are facing *South East*, and withdraw away from the hands.
- Soften the chest and shoulders to allow the elbows to draw in slightly.
- Start to turn the hips to the right. By the time they are facing *South*, the left palm should be facing the left hip. The right elbow has been drawing back, right palm facing down at chest level with the wrist relaxed and the thumb in the centre line.
- Continue to turn the hips to the *South West* corner. When you arrive at the *South West* corner, the left hand should be in line with the right hip, away from the body, palm facing upwards and the right hand

should be palm down, in line with the right shoulder, wrist and elbow relaxed, fingers pointing down. Avoid collapsing the right hand in towards the chest.

- Turn the hips to the *South East* corner and simultaneously raise the left hand to chest level, palm facing upwards. The right hand remains where it is, so as to open the shoulder joint. The left fingers will therefore cut through the line of the right wrist as you turn. Take care to keep the right wrist at shoulder height as you are turning.
- When you are facing *South East*, draw the left toes in to the right heel. Continue to adjust into your right leg as you open the left hip and step shoulder width (i.e. diagonally) to the *East* with the left heel. Transfer your weight to 50-50, synchronising in the both legs and still allowing the hands to change. At the same instant you arrive at 50-50, the left toe should close on the floor and the left knee arrives over the toes
- Turn the hips around the central axis to turn in the right toe. When the toe is at 45 degrees the hips should be facing between the *South East* and the *East*. Drop the hips and the right knee to facilitate continuing the hips turning to the *East* and to create the loading-up. The right hand stays where it is in relation to the body, i.e. it remains pointing to the *South*, so the shoulder joint has to open more. The left palm is still facing inwards. To perform the single whip. As you release from the rear leg, the left hand extends and turns out at chest/throat height, thumb and forefinger in the centre line, palm facing diagonally down. The right hand extends out to the *South* until the elbow is two finger widths down from straight. As the right arm extends, all four finger tips enclose the tip of the thumb. Ensure the wrist is relaxed and the fingers are pointing down.

7. Lift Hands

- Relax the hips vertically down to transfer 80% of the weight into the left leg, without the body's centre line shifting forwards, letting the right knee drop and the right heel come off the floor. Simultaneously open the right hand and start to draw in the arms.
- Sink and turn clockwise to transfer 100% weight into the left leg until the hips face *South East*. The hips continue to turn to the *South South East* as you draw in the right toes to the left heel. Simultaneously, the arms draw in, fingers pointing at each other to form a circular shape within the palms facing inwards at *dan tien* height. The hips should be facing *South South East* and the fingertips should be one fist width apart.
- Continue to adjust into the left leg as you glide the right foot out flat along the floor, squaring the hips to the *South*, and extending the arms out forwards.
- To perform the release for lift hands, sink into the ground under the substantial foot. As the toe comes off the ground, soften the chest and sink the shoulders to lift the arms up. The right hand should be in line with the right shoulder. The left hand is palm up with the thumb one fist width away from the right elbow. The left fingers point *South West* under the right forearm. The left elbow is one fist width away from the body and the right elbow is one hand span away from the body.

8. Shoulder stroke

- The body relaxes and the arms lower to the hip level. The right elbow stops one fist width away from the body. The left hand sits in the arc of the left hip (the *Kua*) with the palm facing up
- Turn the hips to the *East*, the left palm drawing out of the hip to the *North East* corner. As you turn, the right toe turns in to the *East* and finishes flat on the floor. The right arm keeps the same relationship as before to the body, i.e. the palm faces left and the hand is one fist away from the right hip.
- Turn the hips to the *East South East* and simultaneously draw in the right toe, in a curve, to finish where the right heel was. Simultaneously, turn inside the right arm so the right palm is now facing in towards the groin. Note the position of the right toe, then glide the right heel out to the *South* to that position, toes off the floor and the outer edge of the foot 15 degrees inward from *South*. As you transfer the weight to 50-50 a number of things must happen simultaneously: sink through both legs, close the toe to the floor, turn the hips to the *South East* corner and load up by dropping the left knee and both hips. Simultaneously the left hand moves across the body, to the centre line, and finishes at chest height, taking care not to bring the left hand into contact with the body. Maintain the existing space between the right arm and the body.
- To perform shoulder stroke, release from the left leg and simultaneously turn the hips to the *South South East*.

9. White crane spreads its wings

- Sink and turn 100 % of the body-weight into the right foot until the hips face the *South*, whilst dropping the left knee and letting the left heel come off the floor. Simultaneously, the palms turn to face inwards and the left hand relaxes towards the right shoulder, but not touching.
- Turn the hips to the *South East* and draw in the left toes to the right heel, along a curve, whilst also drawing the right elbow up and out at an angle of 45 degrees and drawing the left hand (fingers) down the right arm. This part of the movement is called "washing the arm". The left and right fingertips should be touching at the same instant as the hips reach the *South East* corner and the left toe reaches the right heel.
- Continue to turn the hips to the *East*, whilst simultaneously the left toe glides to the *East* in line with the right heel, the tips of the left thumb and forefinger are touching the side of the thigh, the right shoulder sinks, right elbow turns down and the right hand comes up. The right hand finishes such that the thumb is one hand span *South East* of the right eyebrow and is turned out slightly, almost to the *East South East*.

10. Brush left knee

- Soften the body and sink the shoulders to raise the left and lower the right arms until they are level. The arms are extended but maintain the curves caused by the shoulder/elbow.

- Turn the hips to the *South East*, soften the chest and draw the arms in, sinking the shoulders and dropping the elbows, thus causing the palms to turn inwards. The left thumb should be in line with the left shoulder joint, with the arc of the thumb and index finger at shoulder height, and the right hand in the arc of the right hip. The left foot simultaneously turns on the ball of the foot to point to the *South East*, heel still off the floor. Continue to turn the hips and the left foot to face the *South* as the right hand draws out of the hip, the left elbow stays where it is and the left hand folds in to the centre at chest height.
- Turn the hips and the left foot back to the *South East* and simultaneously the right palm circles up and round behind the right ear, whilst the left hand lowers to breastbone height, thumb still in the centreline. The movement of the right arm is similar to the number 4 loosening exercise. Take care that the elbows do not collapse.
- Continue the movement of the arms as you step diagonally with the left foot, in preparation for an *East* facing bow stance, then transfer the weight to 50-50; the hands/arms are still changing. By the time you are in 50-50, hips still facing *South East*, the right hand should be in the centre at chest level and the left hand in the centre at *dan tien* level. The thumbs should be in line with the centre line of your body.
- To perform brush left knee. Turn in the right toe to 45 degrees, drop the right knee and square up the hips to make a bow stance facing *East*. As you square up, the left hand simultaneously moves to the front of the left thigh and the right hand stays in the centre. As you release, the left hand moves past the thigh to the brush knee position (forefinger and thumb in contact with the outer part of the thigh) and the right hand extends (very) slightly forwards as the shoulders sink and the right elbow drops.

11. Play guitar

- Relax the hips vertically down to transfer 80% of the weight into the left leg, without the body's centreline shifting forwards, letting the right heel come off the floor and simultaneously start to lower the right arm. By the time the sink is complete, the right arm should be horizontal, but does not stop.
- Turn the hips to the *South East* to transfer 100% of the body-weight into the left leg, until the tailbone is over the left heel, and simultaneously continue to relax both arms down by your sides. There should now be 100% of your weight in the left leg and the right foot should be pointing *South*, with the heel off the floor.
- Draw in the right toes halfway to the left heel.
- Lift up the heel and then put the toes down again in the same place, but so that the angle of the foot is 15 degrees *East of South* and the heels are in line.
- Square the hips to the *East* as you simultaneously withdraw the body-weight into the right leg whilst sinking the shoulders and lifting the arms like the opening of the form. As soon as the right heel makes contact with the ground, there should be 100% of your body weight in the right leg and the wrists should be at two thirds of body height.

- To make the play guitar posture. Sink the shoulders, drop the elbows and turn the palms in/up, whilst relaxing the hips and turning to the *South South East*, and sliding the left heel out about halfway to where the toe was, toes off the floor. The left thumb is in line with the left shoulder joint, the arc of the thumb and index finger at shoulder height. The right thumb is in line with the middle of the left forearm, one fist width away, and in the centreline. Both palms face diagonally up.

12. Brush left knee

- Turn the hips to the *South East* as you sink the shoulders and drop the elbows, drawing the arms in and causing the palms to turn inwards. The left hand should finish in line with the left shoulder and the right hand in the arc of the right hip. The left foot simultaneously turns on the heel to the *South South East*, and then the ball of the foot to point *South East*. Note this is different from the previous Brush Left Knee since the stance would be too long to simply turn on the ball of the foot and would cause your centre to be pulled forward.

- Continue to turn the hips and the left foot to the *South* as the right hand draws out of the hip to the *South West* corner, the left elbow stays where it is and the left hand folds in to the centre at chest height.

- Turn the hips and the left foot back to the *South East* and simultaneously the right palm circles up and round behind the right ear, whilst the left hand lowers to breastbone height, thumb still in the centreline. The movement of the right arm is similar to the number 4 loosening exercise. Take care that the elbows do not collapse.

- Continue the movement of the arms as you step diagonally with the left foot, in preparation for an *East* facing bow stance, then transfer the weight to 50-50; the hands/arms are still changing. By the time you are in 50-50, hips still facing *South East*, the right hand should be in the centre at chest level and the left hand in the centre at *dan tien* level. The thumbs should be in line with the centre line of your body.

- To perform brush left knee. Turn in the right toe to 45 degrees, drop the right knee and square up the hips to make a bow stance facing *East*. As you square up, the left hand simultaneously moves to the front of the left thigh and the right hand stays in the centre. As you release, the left hand moves past the thigh to the brush knee position (forefinger and thumb in contact with the outer part of the thigh) and the right hand extends (very) slightly forwards as the shoulders sink and the right elbow drops..

13. Parry and strike

- Sit back away from the right hand just enough to be able to turn out the left toe. The left foot should point 15 degrees *East* of *North* and the toes are off the ground.

- Relax the hips and turn 100% of the body-weight into the left foot, hips facing *North*. As the weight draws fully into the left leg, the right leg relaxes and the knee drops. On arrival the outer edge of the left foot points 15 degrees *East* of *North*. The right foot is pointing *North*, the heel is off the floor and the toes are due *East* of the right heel, approximately shoulder width.

- Jack the body up using the left leg, sink the shoulders and lift the arms, similar to the beginning of the form, but with the palms facing inwards and fingers pointing left and right. The right hand is closer to the body than the left.
- Turn to the *North East* and simultaneously sink into the left leg, placing the right foot on the floor, one foot distance at 45 degrees (*South East*) from the left heel. The right foot should be angled 15 degrees *East of South*. The hips will finish facing *North East*. The shoulders sink and elbows start to drop as you turn.
- Use the hips to turn in the left toes in by 15 degrees (1 inch) until the hips are facing due *East*.
- Turn 100% of the body-weight into the right foot until the hips face *South East*, whilst opening the shoulders and elbows, the left hand turning to face palm up at breastbone height, the right hand falling to the arc of the right hip and forming a fist, palm upwards. There is a downward intention with the left arm.
- Step to the *East* with the left heel.
- Transfer your weight to 50-50, synchronising in both legs. At the same instant you arrive at 50-50, the left toe should close on the floor, the left knee arrives over the toes. The hips are still facing the *South East* corner.
- Use the hips to turn in the right toe to 45 degrees and then square the hips to the *East*. As you square, you should drop the right knee and the hips to load up and move towards the left hand, whilst rotating the right fist until the palm faces *North*. At this point the left palm has turned in to face down at an angle of 45 degrees.
- Release and send out the right fist as a punch forwards. The top of the forearm should glide along the fingertips of the left hand until the left thumb touches the inside of the right elbow. The left hand finishes with the palm facing down.

14. Apparent close-up

- Sit back 90% into the right leg. The hand pivots on the thumb; left fingers move around the under the right elbow, with the thumb still in contact, and the right palm folds in slightly to face the *North East* corner. The time of arrival should coincide with the body weight being 90% in the left leg.
- Drop the right knee and the hips to move forward towards the arms, softening the chest, sinking the shoulders and dropping the elbows and simultaneously the left palm glides along the far side of the right forearm and across the back of the hand until the fingers separate. The thumb, index and middle fingers of each hand should face each other, fist width apart, as you arrive in a bow stance, 50-50 weight distribution.
- Soften the chest and sink the shoulders to extend the hands slightly forwards. Be careful not to drop or raise the hands as you release.

15. Cross hands

- Withdraw away from the hands and let the fingers level out with the wrists. Note this is different from the withdrawal prior to turning for the first single whip, in that there is no drawing in of the elbows afterwards.
- Simultaneously turn the hips and left toes to the *South*, leaving the left hand where it is, thus opening the shoulder joint. The right elbow bends as you turn.
- Sit back into the left leg and turn in the right heel until the foot is pointing *South*. The right arm is still bent at the elbow.
- Continue to turn the hips and the right toe to the *South West*, whilst extending the right arm out to the *West*, at the same level as the left.
- Turn the hips and right toe to the *South* while simultaneously relaxing and lowering the arms to your sides.
- Draw back the right foot parallel to the left and raise the arms. When the right toe touches the floor, your hands should have

27 Accuracy of movement

risen to chest level, left hand closest, palms facing inwards, but the wrists do not touch.

- When the right heel touches the floor, the wrists touch. The hips should be fully seated.
- If you are closing the form at this point, the feet should be shoulder width apart. If you are intending to continue to the next movement, the feet should be just two thirds of shoulder width apart.

End of the First section