Tai Chi
IN 10 WEEKS

Beginner’s Guide

A proven step-by-step plan for integrating the physical and psychological benefits of tai chi into your life

Dr. Aihan Kuhn
CMD, OBT
Take control of your health and well-being

“You [Dr. Kuhn] are a skilled teacher. The way you break down complex moves into simple steps really helps.” —Eileen E., Georgia

“You [Dr. Kuhn] have made such a difference in my life.” —Kim B., Georgia

“Your method of teaching is so good that anyone can learn tai chi from the way you teach.” —Jeff M., Massachusetts

“Dr. Kuhn is wise and generous with her knowledge. I learned with ease.” —Mark C., New Hampshire

“Tai chi is a life-changing experience for me.” —Denise J., Maryland

“I know that if I continue to practice tai chi daily, I will stay healthy.” —Gloria D., Massachusetts

This book is designed to guide beginning students through the fundamentals of tai chi in ten weeks. Dr. Aihan Kuhn teaches readers the twenty-four-step Yang-style form. She shares insight on warming up, healing, and avoiding injury. But tai chi is more than just a physical exercise. It is a way of life. Dr. Kuhn shows readers how this art helps us cultivate health, balance, and qi (energy).

Each day millions of people around the world practice tai chi for wellness, focus, and self-defense. This is a lifelong path. For the novice, that idea can be exciting but also daunting. With all the books, videos, and websites on tai chi, where do you begin?

_Tai Chi in 10 Weeks_ is the answer.

Dr. Aihan Kuhn is a master instructor of tai chi and qigong. In this book she shares the lessons she’s learned in a lifetime of studying and teaching. She is warm and encouraging, making readers of all ages and backgrounds feel welcome.

This book features
- A ten-week plan to guide you through your introduction to tai chi
- Hundreds of beautiful full-color photos
- Warm, welcoming instruction from a master of tai chi and qigong

With this book you will
- Learn the twenty-four-step Yang-style form
- Understand the fundamentals of tai chi
- Discover not just the physical postures of tai chi, but also its psychological, emotional, and spiritual benefits

“Tai chi is a life journey,” Dr. Kuhn writes. _Tai Chi in 10 Weeks_ is your map.

---

**Dr. Aihan Kuhn**, CMD, OBT is an internationally recognized expert instructor of tai chi, qigong, and tui na. She is a medical doctor trained in both Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine, and she holds a diploma in Oriental bodywork therapy. Dr. Kuhn graduated from Hunan Medical University in Changsha, China. She has studied tai chi and qigong since 1978 and is president of the Tai Chi & Qigong Healing Institute. Dr. Kuhn lives and teaches in Sarasota, Florida.

---

Cover photo by Booth Studio, Inc.
Author photo by Tim Comrie
Cover design by Amie Breen

---

YMAA Publication Center
1-800-669-8892
info@ymaa.com / www.ymaa.com
Tai Chi
IN 10 WEEKS

Beginner’s Guide

Dr. Aihan Kuhn
CMD, OBT

YMAA Publication Center
Wolfeboro, NH USA
Contents

Preface  xii

CHAPTER 1  What Is Taiji?   2
    The Benefits of Taiji in Four Major Parts  9

CHAPTER 2  How Taiji and Qigong Work in Human Healing  14
    Health Benefits of Taiji and Qigong  16
    How Taiji and Qigong Prevent Brain Aging and Memory Loss  22

CHAPTER 3  The Difference between Taiji and Qigong  40
    Fundamental Principles of Taiji Practice  44
    Taiji Mental State and Physical Postures  45
    Taiji Basic Movement Requirements  50
    Taiji Practice Requirements  51
Taiji Mental Requirements  55
How to Avoid Injuries in Taiji Practice  57
Suggestions and Precautions for Your Practice  60
Guidelines for Your Learning Journey  65

CHAPTER 4 Taiji Practice Step by Step  68
  Warm-Up Exercise  68
  Foundation Practice  88
  Twenty-Four Step, Yang-Style Taijiquan Form  133

CHAPTER 5 Ten-Week Learning Guidelines  136
  Self-Check List  183
  Taiji 10-Week Plan  185
  Letters from Students  189
  Notes  195
  Acknowledgments  199
  About the Author  203
Welcome to the world of taiji (tai chi). As we will see, this is a timeless Chinese art with millions of practitioners all around the globe. Taiji has many facets. It is an art, as I have said, but it is also a type of meditation. It’s an internal practice, a martial art, and a form of medicine. Taiji can be a social gathering and even exercise for brain fitness. I am excited to share this profound tradition with you.

When we practice taiji, we become part of a community that shares qi, or vital energy. Sharing qi creates a healing wave that is the key to well-being, peace, and happiness. This is a harmonious and healthy living group. Our community is growing stronger and bigger every year because we share qi. We give it and receive it from one another; it is endless and infinite. We help others with our qi.

When I was beginning my career as a doctor, my focus was mainly on treating disease. I empathized when I saw patients at the end stage of their illness and felt hopeless. I used to be sad when I saw patients suffering from an incurable illness, eventually dying. I realized there was nothing I could do.

Now my focus has changed. I have dedicated myself to prevention, holistic healing education, and helping people understand the importance of prevention. In this way, people can avoid getting a disease, or at least they have hope for healing. This work may not seem very impressive to some people, but it has tremendous value. I can help people avoid illnesses, bring back their happiness, prolong their lives, and help them increase the quality of their lives.

I enjoy being this kind of doctor—a doctor who cares about people’s health, not only about disease. I believe this is what gives a doctor the most value.

My work has changed many lives. I’ve received several hundred letters from people I have treated and taught, and I can see and feel their happiness through their words.

Part of my success is from my patients and my students. They understand that prevention requires participation. They practice qigong and taiji on a regular basis, which is key to their healing. They are my heroes because they help themselves in the
healing process, and they encourage me to continue my work. This is the work of a lifetime, just as taiji is a lifetime pursuit.

That brings us to the title of this book: *Tai Chi in 10 Weeks*. Can you really learn taiji in ten weeks? You cannot become a taiji master, of course, but you can learn the fundamentals of this art. You can build the foundation for this life-changing journey.

As a starting place, you will need to read the whole book. I suggest you use a pencil or pen to mark sections you think will be important for future review. Review your notes after you have been practicing taiji for six months. Studying in this way will help you to better understand this art, and you will be able to learn relatively fast. Regular practice is very important if you want to truly understand the nature of taiji and qigong. The theory and practice of taiji and qigong go hand in hand and stand side by side; one is not more important than the other.

In order to gain maximum benefits from practice, I recommend that students and instructors follow the taiji principles and pursue a structured learning experience, which can speed up the learning process. This book is intended to help students, instructors, and practitioners understand taiji theory and technique, as well as help them to have a better experience with learning and practicing, both in a group and as individuals.
If you want to use taiji for healing chronic issues, this book not only helps you understand how to do that but also guides you through the routine. You will find your self-study and practice easy and enjoyable.

If you are an instructor, this book will help you become more confident and more knowledgeable so your teaching may attract more students. You will be able to answer students’ questions and instruct students at different levels.

The book is presented in a straightforward and organized fashion. The easy-to-read chapters and useful illustrations make learning simple and fun. Once you have read through the book once or twice, you will have a very good understanding of the approach to taiji study and the philosophy that goes with it.

You can use this book to supplement any classes or video instruction on the twenty-four-step form. I also invite you to try the companion DVD, *Tai Chi in 10 Weeks* (YMAA, 2017).

Being involved in taiji and qigong exercise is a wonderful learning and healing journey. People from all over the world practice these arts for their health and healing benefits. These benefits include improving internal and external strength, refining internal harmony, restoring mental clarity, balancing emotions, and developing better overall health. Additionally, people can enjoy the sensation and satisfaction that come from practicing taiji and qigong. As you practice for a while, you become more and more familiar with your own energy, your passion, and your feelings. You also improve your intuition, which helps you identify the positive and negative influences in your life. You can see what flows and what does not flow, and your enhanced intuition will ultimately guide you to go with the flow. Going with the flow not only reduces your stress but also helps you continue to move forward in life.

No one can live forever, but everyone can find ways to enjoy good health, happiness, and however much time we may have ahead. If we have many physical illnesses and struggle on a daily basis, or if we struggle with our mental and emotional issues, we lose the precious time we have. That is not quality living.

Taiji and qigong have already changed my life in many ways. It is the science of *energy medicine* that Western scientists have just begun paying attention to.

I wish you a wonderful journey of healing in taiji and qigong.

**Dr. Aihan Kuhn**
Moral Qualities of the Taiji Student
(Twelve Commitments)

1. The taiji student will not be prejudiced, judgmental, or biased regarding anyone’s economic position, religion, race, or health condition. The taiji student will be accepting of people of all races, all abilities, and all ages as a part of the taiji family. The taiji student is kind to people.

2. The taiji student respects masters, instructors, and students at all levels.

3. The taiji student respects the practice facility and takes care of the facility, just as if it were his or her own house.

4. The taiji student shares knowledge and experience with others, helps others, and has only good intentions.

5. The taiji student will study taiji with modesty and practice diligently.

6. The taiji student is sincere and honest with himself or herself and with others.

7. The taiji student forgives others on all occasions.

8. The taiji student obeys all the rules of the school.

9. The taiji student understands and respects Daoist philosophy. The taiji student does not hate, hold grudges, or hold on to negative energy.

10. The taiji student loves and cares about his or her own person, just as he or she loves and cares about others.

11. The taiji student cherishes group energy and friendship.

12. The taiji student will only use the taiji martial skill for the protection of self, family, and other people in an urgent situation, never intending to show off.
What Is Taiji?

Taiji is an ancient Chinese exercise for health improvement, spiritual growth, disease prevention, healing assistance, and self-defense. It involves slow, circular movements; mental concentration; breath control; relaxation; and meditation. It has been proven that the practice of taiji offers great health benefits, including improvements in circulation, metabolism, balance, flexibility, posture, mental focus, immune function, daily energy levels, organ function, emotional balance, self-awareness, and brain health. Taiji is an exercise for all ages and all fitness levels. It is a sophisticated form of exercise that works on internal energy and manifests externally. It is a gift from the Chinese culture.

Taiji is the abridged name of taijiquan. “Tai” in Chinese means “bigger than big,” “ji” means “extreme,” and “quan” means “boxing.” Taiji used to be called “soft boxing.” Altogether, taijiquan can be translated as “grand force boxing.” Taiji’s focus is on inner energy and achieving inner peace through movement.

Taiji has many qualities. It is a form of art that can be observed in its beautiful movements. It intrigues people from all over the world. When you watch people in the park doing taiji, you may feel like they are performing a slow, graceful, fluid dance. You can feel the harmony in the taiji form, but you don’t see the power in those graceful movements. There is an ancient Chinese proverb by Sun Tzu, the author of The Art of War: “to win without fighting.”

Taiji is a form of meditation. It is sometimes called moving meditation or walking meditation. This kind of meditation helps you detach from stress in daily life and allows you to move on and move forward. In addition to stress relief, practicing this meditation also helps you balance your emotions and removes much of the mental “junk” that accumulates in our lives. By “junk” I mean useless thoughts or thoughts that make you unhappy. Some people practice sitting meditation, and others like moving meditation. Both are good; it just depends on how you like to meditate. For people

CHAPTER 1

What Is Taiji?
who have arthritis, fibromyalgia, or other circulation problems, taiji and qigong are much better than sitting meditation.

Taiji is an internal practice that builds your strength internally and externally. Taiji is a type of qigong; it is considered the higher level of qigong. Qigong is also an internal practice. In general, qigong is simpler and easier than taiji. Taiji movements are much more difficult, and you will need time to learn and practice.

Taiji is a martial art. In every movement of taiji, you can find a martial arts application that can be used for self-defense. As you practice and proceed to higher levels, you will understand its martial aspect and martial application. Taiji “push hands” is to practice taiji martial skill or taiji martial application. In taiji push hands, we say, “Four ounces can defeat a thousand pounds.” In other words, taiji has power if applied.

Taiji and qigong are often called energy medicine or preventive medicine. The term “energy medicine” can be confusing; it has many meanings. In taiji we refer to a real internal energy workout that improves your qi, your vital energy. You can see and feel the results. Through qi practice, your self-healing ability and your immune system both improve. Not only can you heal yourself, but you can also prevent sickness and plateauing in life. In many cases, taiji and qigong can assist in the treatment and healing of chronic illnesses. From my own experience, taiji and qigong have helped with many of my ailments: asthma, arthritis, aches, pains, and negative emotions. It has also made me stronger internally. For people with cancer, both taiji and qigong can be excellent natural healing methods for enhancing organ and immune system function, which is the key to fighting cancer.

Taiji can be a type of social gathering—a “qi group.” Taiji can be a group energy workout. The group practice creates a “qi field.” The qi field affects individuals in a nurturing and positive way. That is why you feel good every time you practice in a group, even if you do not totally understand taiji or if you have not been doing taiji for long. This does not mean you must practice with other people every time. You still get benefits if you practice by yourself. When you reach a higher level, practicing taiji by yourself can really help you work on your qi, develop your concentration, improve your internal condition, and be grounded.

Taiji is a special type of brain fitness practice. Taiji and qigong can quiet your mind and regulate your breath. Regulating your breath not only allows your brain to rest but also brings more oxygen to the body and brain through deep breathing. In addition, the
special movements of taiji stimulate and activate all parts of the brain. This is why people who practice taiji regularly show well-rounded living skills: balanced emotions, intuition, cognitive function, problem-solving skills, ability to learn quickly, logical decision making, and organization. In my book *Brain Fitness*, I describe in more detail how taiji affects our brains.

The benefits of practicing taiji and qigong are phenomenal. It benefits the entire body from head to toe. It strengthens muscles, tendons, joints, and circulation of blood and energy. It improves the immune system, mental concentration, balance, coordination, alertness, learning ability, and much more. As you start to explore the path of taiji, you will discover many other benefits too.

**Mind-Body-Spirit**

Eastern exercises always emphasize wholeness—the mind, the body, and the spirit. By contrast, most Western-style exercises are mainly focused on developing the body.

Why are our mind, body, and spirit important?

Our *mind* is the thinking part of our existence and determines how we walk, how we read and analyze data, how we communicate, how we make decisions, and how we solve problems. The *body* is the physical part of our existence, doing the eating, sleeping, walking, jogging, cooking, using tools, driving, and other physiological activities. The *spirit* is the meaningful part of our existence. It is where our hopes, our dreams, our beliefs, our passions, our fears, our love, and our hate are expressed. All of these parts are equally important. Taiji has the potential to bridge these parts by putting the practitioner in a state of mind where the connections among them are clear. When the three parts are in harmony, our body is strong, our mind is clear, and our spirit is pure and superior. This is what we call reaching the peak of qi.

Taiji touches all aspects of the person at the same time, reinforcing the perception that these so-called separate parts are but different aspects of the whole person. Taiji helps to open the body’s energy pathways when practiced with mind, body, and spirit. It is not enough to simply copy the physical movements. By practicing taiji, you must incorporate all three parts through relaxation, meditation, concentration, study of ancient texts, and taiji theory.
Taiji Practice Step by Step

Warm-Up Exercise

The warm-up has three parts: gentle warm-up, light cardio, and stretching. The warm-up exercises listed below involve whole-body movements. They are designed to activate energy and blood flow as well as loosen the muscles, tendons, and joints. They will also help the student avoid injury during taiji practice. This is very important for all practitioners and students. If you want to practice taiji in the morning, warm-up exercises can wake you up better than coffee (though this does not mean you need to quit drinking coffee). You can also use a short-distance run for a warm-up followed by stretching. However, running can be difficult depending on the weather, or if you have problems with your knees or other joints.

To practice the warm-up exercise, you can go through all the movements listed here or just do some of the movements from each category as time and physical ability allow. If you have trouble with certain movements, you can start gently in the beginning and then gradually increase the intensity, or you can skip the movement you have trouble with. You can also choose some warm-up exercise movements before taiji practice and some for after practice. You should especially do stretching before and after. A warm-up exercise can be ten to fifteen minutes depending on the individual. If I don’t have much time, I will do seven minutes. If you have more problems in one area, you can spend more time and focus on that area. For instance, if you have back tightness, you can spend more time doing the exercises that help you loosen your back. Each one has its own focus and works on a specific part of the body.

I always like to use music because it provides extra benefits to our health. You can choose whatever music you wish. For warm-up, the music can be faster or uplifting; for taiji practice, the music can be slower and peaceful.
PART I: GENTLE WARM-UP

Lifting Heels and Body

- This is an easy movement. Lift our heels to lift your body. You can lift our body two times with each inhalation and two times with each exhalation.

Neck Movement

- Always do these movements gently and smoothly, especially if you have neck problems. Turn your head gently and smoothly to the left and then to the right. Do this four times.

- Next move your head up and down four times.
■ Next roll your head in one direction four times and in the other direction four times.

■ Finally, stretch your neck by holding your head down for two breaths.
Shoulder Movement

- Move your shoulders up and down. Repeat four times.

- Rotate your shoulders forward and then backward, four times in each direction.

- Then inhale and move shoulders up, exhale, and move shoulders down. Do this four times too.

Circle Arms
Elbow and Wrist Rotation

- This is not hard to do. Rotate your wrist in one direction and then the other.

Next rotate your elbow in one direction, then the other. Do the same rotations on the other arm.

Circle left arm forward in a big circle four times, then backward four times. Circle the right arm forward four times, then backward four times.
About the Author

Dr. Aihan Kuhn is a unique doctor of naturopathic medicine (holistic medicine). She is a speaker, an award-winning author, and a master of taiji and qigong. Trained in both conventional medicine and traditional Chinese medicine, Dr. Kuhn has helped thousands of patients overcome various physical ailments and emotional imbalances. She incorporates taiji and qigong into her healing methodologies, changing the lives of people who had struggled for many years and had no relief from conventional medicine. From her healing, patients also learn self-care techniques and strategies that help them to continue their healing journey at home. These techniques also help self-confidence, relationships, stress management, daily energy level, and better focus.

Dr. Kuhn provides many wellness programs, natural healing workshops, and professional training programs, such as her Tai Chi Instructor Training, Qi Gong Instructor Training, and Wellness Tui Na Therapy certification courses. These highly rated programs have produced many quality teachers and therapists.

Dr. Kuhn is president of the Tai Chi & Qi Gong Healing Institute (www.TaiChi-Healing.org), which is a nonprofit organization that promotes natural healing and prevention through an annual natural healing conference, World Tai Chi Day, healing qigong exercises, Daoist study, and special programs.

Dr. Kuhn now lives in Sarasota, Florida. She continues her natural healing education and offers consultations and private healing retreats for people who live far away to help them restore their health, inner balance, and vitality. For more information, please visit her website, www.draihankuhn.com.

Dr. Kuhn offers wellness education programs to help people improve their health, career, and overall quality of life. These programs include the following:
The Secrets to Women’s Health and Healing
Natural Methods for Relief from Anxiety
The Road to Fearless Living
Relieve Stress in Seven Minutes
Medicine: East Meets West
Lose Weight in Seven Days
Cancer Healing the Natural Way
Weight Loss the Natural Way
Qigong for Your Brain
Emotion Healing through Body Movements
Brain Fitness
Food and Healing

Professional Training Programs (all offer continuing education credits for massage therapists):

- Qi Gong Instructor Training
- Tai Chi Instructor Training
- Wellness Tui Na Therapy
- Tui Na for Back Therapy
- Tui Na for Neck Therapy

For more information,
please visit www.DrAiHanKuhn.com and www.taichihealing.org.
Books by Dr. Kuhn:

Simple Chinese Medicine
Natural Healing with Qigong
Tai Chi for Depression
Weight Loss the Natural Way
Qi Gong for Travelers
  Tai Chi in 10 Weeks
  Brain Fitness

Videos by Dr. Kuhn:

Tai Chi Chuan (24 Steps, Yang Style)
Tai Chi Chuan (42 Steps, Combined Style)
Tai Chi Chuan (24 Steps, Chen Style)
Tai Chi Sward (42 Steps, Combined Style)
Tai Chi Fan (Single Fan)
Tai Chi 16 Steps (for Internal Healing)
Therapeutic Qi Gong (36 Movements)
Meridian Qi Gong
Qi Gong for Arthritis
Circle Energy Qi Gong
Eight Brocade Qi Gong
Twelve Minutes Qi Gong for Computer Users
Tai Chi for Depression
Dr. Kuhn Tai Chi Form Collection