

Use it or Lose it: Gaining
Balance, Flexibility and
Strength

Tai Chi
For health Exercises



TEEA Leader Guide

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Use It or Lose It: Gaining Balance, Flexibility and Strength Tai Chi for Health Exercises Leader Guide

Goals and Objectives

1. Encourage physical activity at each person's ability level by focusing on and improving three evidence-based elements: Balance, Flexibility and Strength
2. Learn the health benefits of Tai Chi
3. Learn basic movement and activities that:
 - a. Improve overall body functioning and life skills
 - b. Improve walking stance and posture
 - c. Reduce risk of falling
 - d. Gain body and mind benefits

Resources Needed

1. Space for each participant to perform exercises
2. A sturdy chair for each participant
3. Following Lesson materials (Download from <https://teea.tamu.edu> under State Education Program Tab – select 2019 Education Programs)
 - a. “Use It or Lose It” Power Point. Laptop and projector.
 - b. “Use It or Lose It” Handout
 - c. “Use It or Lose It” Manual, This booklet contains a full, detailed teaching guide with pictures and instructions for all exercises and movements and links to demonstration videos.
4. Optional: “Workout to Go” Booklet, *National Institutes of Health*, October 2011. (Order at www.nia.nih.gov/Go4Life, Publication # 11-4258.)

Ice Breaker

Take a vote on responses to this question: Who can benefit from improved balance, flexibility and strength? (All answers are correct.)

- a. All adults
- b. Adults with balance problems
- c. Adults with arthritis
- d. Adults with sedentary jobs/lifestyle

Use It or Lose It: Gaining Balance, Flexibility & Strength

Tai Chi for Health Exercises

Session Handout

What is Tai Chi?

Tai Chi focuses on internal movement, balance, harmony of movement. Intentionally internalizes focus vs. relying on strength and speed with an external opponent like external martial arts (judo, karate, etc.). Most often practiced for health purposes as a lifelong learning activity because there are no barriers to participation, no equipment needed, and progress occurs at an individual pace.

Balance

Unless someone has an inner ear problem, balance is a consciously learned skill that relies on body strength and knowing where your weight is concentrated and how you want to move it. The parts of the body outside the inner ear that are essential to balance include core muscles (in the back, across the stomach, and in the chest), and the feet, ankles, knees and hips.

- **Core Strength:** There are many core strength exercises available. Refer to the handout on seated core strength exercises.
- **Ankle and foot strength:** There are a number of foot strengthening exercises described on a separate handout (e.g. calf raises, foot scrunches).
- **Knee and hip strength:** There are a number of exercises mentioned in a different handout to help with this (e.g., leg raises and leg kicks).

Resources

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/balance-exercises/sls-20076853>

This website provides five balance exercises with photos that rely on already having strength in the above-described areas. Therefore, you may need to build up a little strength before trying them.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/balance-training-to-boost-health/art-20270119>

This resource provides written descriptions of other ways to challenge your balance.

<https://wellness.unl.edu/pdf/physicalactivity/Strength%20and%20Balance%20Exercises.pdf>

This is a printable document showing some balance and strength exercises.

<https://www.silversneakers.com/blog/fit-for-life-exercises-improve-balance/>

This U-Tube video provides 12 exercises that improve balance and comes from the Silver Sneakers editors. Silver Sneakers is a health and fitness program designed for adults 65 and older that is included with many Medicare plans.

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Balance: How to Stand - Body Alignment

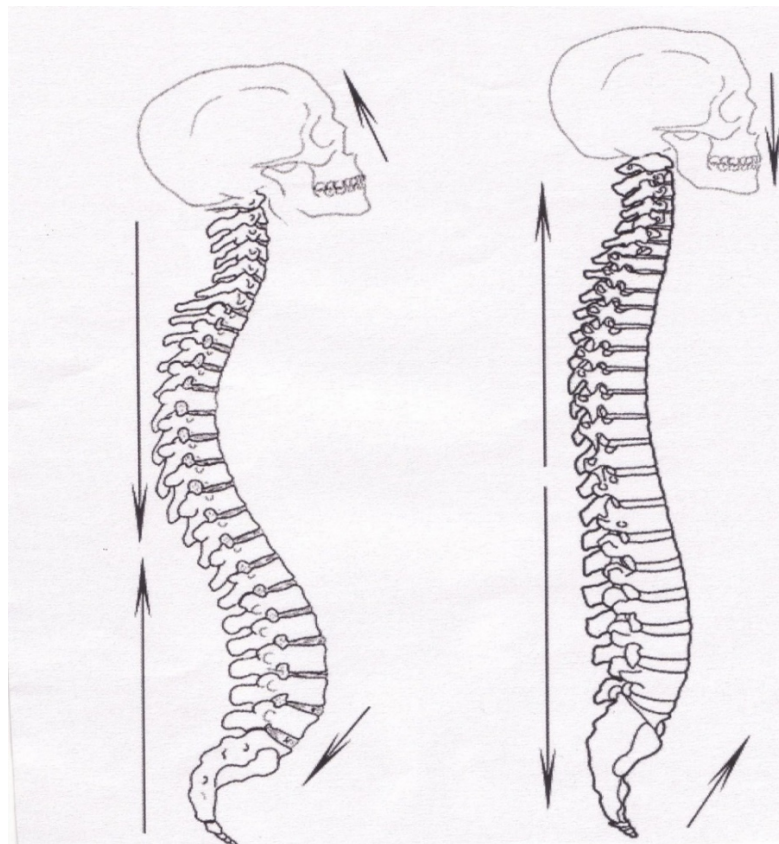
Having a correct stance is one of the principle keys to improving balance and the foundation to all other movements in Tai Chi.

Become conscious of checking yourself and making the adjustment into proper alignment any time you can. You may be surprised at how often you let yourself slide out of alignment and at how much work it is to maintain it. If you have very poor alignment, you will be doing frequent adjustments and you may become fatigued. If you get too tired, just stop adjusting so much and build up your strength slowly. Remember, it took you years to develop your current stance – it is not going to correct itself overnight.

There are five body points important for correct alignment alignment: **head** (pull up toward the ceiling), **chin** (down), **shoulders** (placed so arms fall to the sides of your legs), **pelvis** (straight vs. angled forward or back) and **unlocked knees**. Stand with feet shoulder width apart. The diagram below provides a look at the changes in the spine if you are doing this correctly.

Incorrect Alignment

Correct Alignment



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Flexibility

Flexibility is a reference to how “moveable” certain body components are. These include joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia – essentially the soft tissues of the body. Consider a stiff rubber band. After you stretch it a few times, it becomes more flexible. The same is true of these body parts.

Any sort of stretching and movement will facilitate gaining or maintaining flexibility. However, once you start on a program of stretching, be aware that it will need to become part of your normal routine in order for you to maintain the benefits that it provides. Also, remember that it is easy to overstretch, so work gently.

Resources

There are many exercises that facilitate development of flexibility. You can find many on your own, but here are a few links that may be helpful.

<https://www.ramfitness.com/stretching.html> -- These are free printable stretching guides for different parts of the body.

<http://www.stretching-exercises-guide.com/exercises-for-seniors.html>

This is an online stretching guide for seniors, with a variety of types as well an explanation about the science of stretching (how to do it, how long to do it, and muscle physiology).

http://www.printablee.com/post_printable-seated-exercises-for-seniors_178652/

This website has images that are printable to show seniors how to stretch while seated. There are seated yoga stretches available; yoga is an ancient stretching exercise.

<https://www.belmarrahealth.com/best-stretching-exercises-for-seniors/> This is an article describing some stretching exercises. Unfortunately, there are no photos of each exercise.

https://www.nhs.uk/Tools/Documents/NHS_ExercisesForOlderPeople.pdf This is a printable document from the National Health Services of the United Kingdom. It describes seated exercises. It has photos and targets specific areas of the body, so people can choose what area needs more work.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Uzk6f2GnO8> This is a 10 minute video showing a chair workout for seniors.

<https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/features/fitness-beginners-guide#1> This website provides a “beginner’s guide to exercise”, which covers stretching as well as weight reduction and even targeted exercise for lower back pain.

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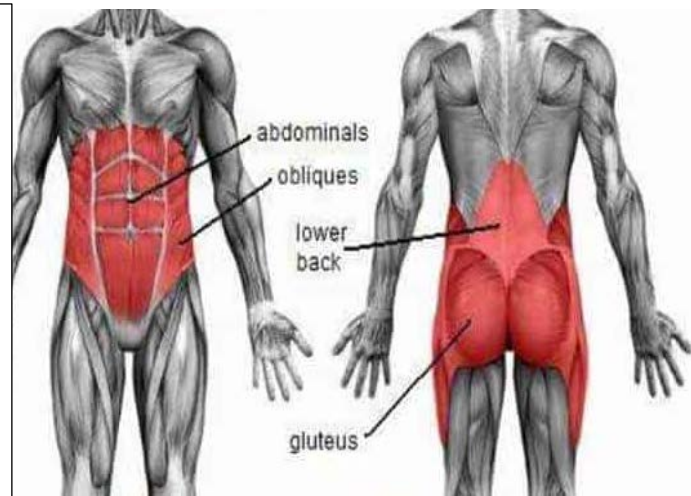
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Strength

As you have likely already realized, strength, flexibility and balance link to one another. It is difficult to have one without the others and difficult to find exercises that do not use at least two of the three. However, without strength, balance is nearly impossible. The foundation for practicing Tai Chi is to have sufficient strength and flexibility to control one's balance.

It is common when speaking of strength to hear the need for strengthening the **“core” muscles**. Exactly what does that mean? According to Wikipedia, “the core of the body is broadly considered to be the torso. Functional movements are highly dependent on this part of the body, and lack of core muscular development can result in a predisposition to injury. **The major muscles of the core reside in the area of the belly and the mid and lower back (not the shoulders), and peripherally include the hips, the shoulders and the neck.**”



Resources

There are many ways to exercise the body's core muscles and all other muscles used in balance and walking. Here are a few resources that may be helpful.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/multimedia/core-strength/sls-20076330?s=2>

Here are illustrations from the Mayo Clinic for some core exercises with a fitness ball. Click on each exercise name to see more photos showing that exercise.

<https://eldergym.com/exercises-for-the-elderly/>

ElderGym has a variety of fitness exercises that may be helpful for weight training.

<https://www.parentgiving.com/elder-care/building-core-muscles-key-to-longevity-and-independence/>

This article describes some core exercises.

<https://aparadiseforparents.com/9-easy-senior-resistance-band-exercises/>

Using resistance bands is an excellent strength building exercise. This resource has videos, too.

<https://www.sparkpeople.com/resource/exercises-printable.asp>

This website has printable exercises for a variety of different uses.

<https://www.acefitness.org/about-ace/aarp-fitness-wellness-program>

For AARP members, there are varieties of resources available online. This is one of them.

<https://dailycaring.com/video-15-minute-senior-exercise-program-for-balance-and-strength/>

This is a 15-minute video showing both balance and strength exercises.

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Tai Chi
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Dr. Suzanne Droleskey, Texas A&M University

TEEA, San Marcos, September 2019

	<h2>What is Tai Chi?</h2>
	<h3>Chinese Internal Martial Art</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▸ Movements based on martial arts▸ Research shows improvements in balance, flexibility, strength, and more▸ Lifelong learning activity▸ Today -- Tai Chi for health activities

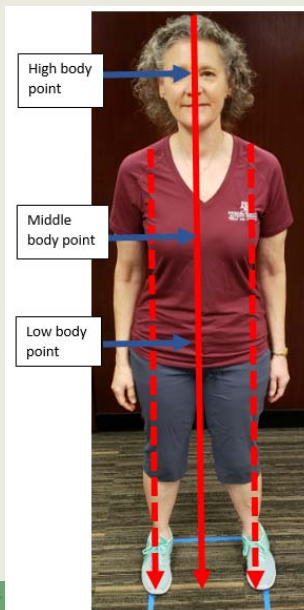
Tai Chi focuses on internal movement, balance, harmony of movement. Intentionally internalizes focus vs. relying on strength and speed with an external opponent like external martial arts (judo, karate, etc.). Most often practiced for health purposes as a lifelong learning activity because there are no barriers to participation, no equipment needed, and progress occurs at an individual pace.

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese martial art, now practiced for its health benefits.

Today, we will be learning some general movements that underpin Tai Chi movements, but this class will primarily be a “Tai Chi for Health” class, not a true Tai Chi class where you learn Tai Chi forms in one of the five Tai Chi styles. However, all the principles taught apply to Tai Chi and will assist anyone transitioning into a full Tai Chi class whether in person or through digital media.

Today we will be focusing on exercises that improve balance, flexibility and strength.

Tai Chi Basics



- Body reference points: high, middle, and low
- Centerline
- Shoulder line
- Continuous breathing through nose only and from diaphragm

In Tai Chi, arms/hands use these reference points (as well as your shoulder and over your head) to guide their position or height during a movement. Because everyone is a different size, where your arms are may differ from where someone else's are.

Watch someone breathe while they are sleeping. You will notice that their belly moves up and down to push air out and pull air in like a bellows. This is why breathing from the diaphragm is sometimes called "natural breathing". Adults often raise and lower their shoulders to breathe instead of using their diaphragms.

Breathing from your diaphragm will allow you to inhale more deeply and exhale more efficiently. This is important because the more oxygen you breathe in and the more carbon dioxide you exhale, the more energetic you will feel.

Warm Ups: Joint Circles

- Hands
- Wrists
- Elbows
- Shoulders
- Toes
- Ankles
- Knees
- Hips

Except for hands and toes, which are rolling motions, these exercises are done gently in circular motion 3 – 5 times in each direction, isolating the key joint(s).

You may sit or stand or alternate between these as you feel comfortable. Listen to your body and your medical advisors so you don't overdo any exercise.

Always do warm ups prior to exercise. The idea is to warm up each major joint gently and to promote the production of synovial fluid. Do each one 3 - 5 times. For those with arthritis, these gentle joint warm ups may be very helpful in reducing pain and stiffness and can be practiced as a separate exercise on their own.

Start with the fingers and hands – work your way up to the shoulder. Then, go to the toes/feet and work your way up to the hips.

Warm Ups: Spinal Stretch



- Stand in Horse Stance
- Press up with one hand
- Press down with the other
- Switch hands

For an extra stretch, look up at the hand above your head. When you switch arms, look down at your low hand.
Keep your body straight, and your hands in line with the spine as the side view shows.
Don't worry if your upper arm is not directly above your head. Do your best.

Warm Ups: Seated Leg Stretches

- Torso forward
- Heel flexed
- Leg straight
- Bend to side
- Carry your weight on your hand
- Don't overdo!



You may do this standing if you wish.

Sit in a chair with your legs open 90 degrees, with both feet on the floor. Point your hips toward the foot in front. Stretch out the leg that is to the side, and flex your foot, so the weight is resting on the heel. Keeping your hips pointed toward your front, slide your hand down your outstretched leg.

If you want more stretch, raise your arm over your head.

You do not need to do both leg stretches in warm ups, but you may if you like.



- Place your feet shoulder width apart (in Horse Stance).
- Do not bend your knees more than just a tiny bit that you need to “unlock” them.
- Lengthen your spine by pulling your head up toward the ceiling.
- Mind your head: do not angle your chin up or down as you lengthen your spine.
- It is important to focus on the alignment of feet (at shoulder width) and parallel
- Is your pelvis lined up straight from top to bottom or is it angled forward or backward? The pelvis needs to be straight.
- To relieve pressure on your lower back, pull your stomach muscles in and be sure your knees are unlocked.
- Relax your shoulders.

You can practice alignment as a separate exercise. For example, stand and hold the position for 1-2 minutes (watch a few commercials as you do it, to make it easy to fit into your routine) and breathe in and out deeply as you do so.

Balance: Horse Stance

- Body aligned as described
- Feet parallel
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Weight distributed 50/50 between both feet



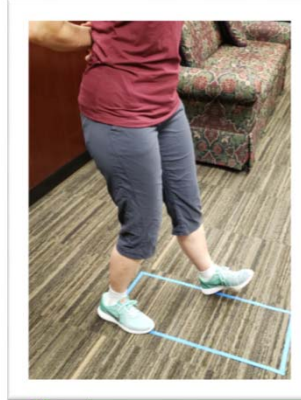
Face a partner while you do this and let them help you get into a position where you are shoulder width apart. Or, if there are a small number of participants, the instructor can check each one.

Check your body alignment (head, chin, shoulders, pelvis, and knees).

Check your distance between your feet – shoulder width placement will allow you to draw a line from the outside of your shoulder (or from your armpit) to the outside of your corresponding foot.

Balance: Walking

- Keep feet parallel
- Keep feet shoulder width apart
- Reach in front with the heel and set it down



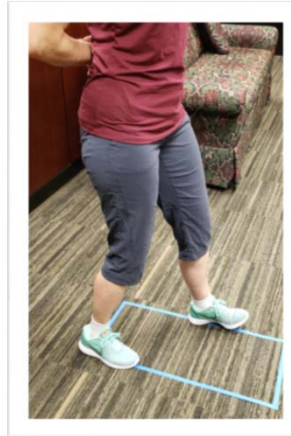
The goal is to keep your feet shoulder width apart throughout this movement without looking down at your feet. If there is a feeling of “knee twisting”, feet can be slightly angled outward so the twisted feeling disappears.

Balance on one foot – Start in Horse stance. Keeping your feet pointed straight forward, shift your weight onto one leg by rolling up onto the toe of the other foot. This is called “filling” one leg and “emptying” the other. Keep the weighted knee slightly bent.

Extend leg forward -- When you feel balanced and comfortable, extend the unweighted leg and reach it out in front of you, setting the heel of that foot down in front of you, on the line of the box around your feet so it is still shoulder width apart (like you were moving it forward into a bow stance). Keep your torso centered over the weighted foot. Do not fall forward or move your torso forward to set the heel down. You should be able to pick the foot up again without leaning or shifting your weight backwards.

Balance: Walking

- Roll down onto the full foot by slowly shifting weight forward
- The toes are the last part of the foot to touch the ground



Weight the front foot -- Slowly roll down from your heel to your flat foot so the weight is more on your front foot and bend the front knee slightly. The photo to the right shows the foot almost flat, but not quite. Keep going until the foot is flat on the ground and there is weight on it.

Balance: Walking

- Move forward by lifting the back heel
- Push up onto your back toe
- Step forward, heel down first
- Repeat the cycle, heel to toe and toe to heel
- Feet stay shoulder width apart



Step forward -- To continue moving forward, roll up onto the back toe; this will shift more weight forward in anticipation of moving the back leg forward. Move the back foot forward the same way that you moved the first foot forward.

Rolling up and down on your foot from "heel to toe" and "toe to heel" will help prevent falling based on "stubbing your toe".

Balance Exercise: Heel-Toe

- Start in Horse Stance, turn the back foot to 45 degrees
- Heel down in front, staying shoulder width apart
- Arms behind



Imagine the rectangle around your feet just as we normally do to think about moving from Horse Stance to a Bow Stance. Usually, your feet are at one end of the box. But, this time, put your feet in the middle of the box. **Stand in Horse Stance. Turn one foot to 45 degrees.**

For safety, either stand next to a wall or put a chair next to one side of your body, closest to the foot that will be weight bearing once the exercise starts. That way, if you need to grab something for balance, you are able to do it. Keep your touch light; you want your feet, ankles, knees and hips doing the work, not the grip you have on the chair or wall.

Reach in Front with the Foot and Behind with the Arms at the Same Time – Notice that the front foot reaches toward the front corner of the box, not directly in front of your weight bearing foot.

- If you feel unbalanced, work only with your feet and do not use your arms at all – add them when you feel comfortable later.
- Your torso does not move. Your weight stays balanced over your weight-bearing foot – no lunging backwards with extra weight on the back foot. All the weight stays on the weight bearing foot.
- If you feel unbalanced reaching backwards, just bring your arms and foot half way through the cycle and pause with your feet on the same plane and your arms are at your sides. Then, finish.

Balance Exercise: Heel-Toe

- Reach behind you, toward the back corner of the box
- Toe down in back, staying shoulder width apart
- Arms in front
- Stop half way if necessary
- Switch legs and repeat



Do two things simultaneously: take your front foot to the rear and your arms forward.

- Let your weight bearing foot, ankle, and knee move freely to support the movement in the leg that is moving forward and back. Keep the knee supporting your weight slightly bent/"unlocked"
- You may use a chair to help you balance. If you do this, keep your weight bearing leg closest to the chair and do not move the arm closest to the chair.
- Do not look down – that throws you off balance.

Flexibility: Head & Hands

- Start in Horse Stance
- Hands up
- Fingers spread
- Head follows hands
- Breathe in and out through the nose



Flexibility is a reference to how “moveable” certain body components are. These include joints, muscles, tendons, ligaments and fascia – essentially the soft tissues of the body. Consider a stiff rubber band. After you stretch it a few times, it becomes more flexible. The same is true of these body parts.

All the joint circles used as warm ups are good for flexibility.

Start in Horse Stance – Bend your arms at the elbow and open your hands near your shoulders. Point your palms away from your face. ***Inhale deeply through your nose.***

Relax. Do not tense up any muscles.

Your hands should be near your shoulders. You are close enough if you can reach back and touch your shoulders with your thumbs.

Be sure your elbows are pointed down instead of out.

Flexibility: Head and Hands

- Head and hands go down, exhale
- Head and hands go up, inhale
- Rotate palms upward at the end of this movement, exhale



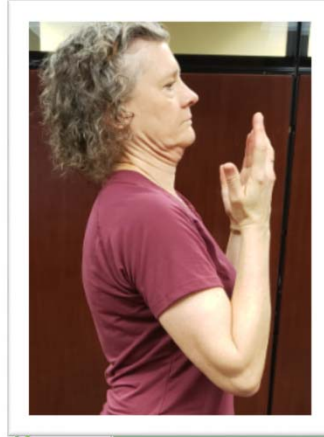
Press down and look down -- Bending at the elbows, push your palms toward the floor until your arms are near your sides, with the palms facing behind you. At the same time, drop your head so you can watch your hands. You will end with your chin on or close to your chest. *Exhale slowly as you do this.*

Raise Arms, raise head -- Raise your arms to shoulder height, keeping your arms about shoulder width apart. At the same time, raise your head, as though you are looking at your hands. *Inhale slowly as you raise your arms.*

Rotate your palms – Slowly turn your palms upward so they face the ceiling. *Inhale deeply as you do this.*

Flexibility: Head and Hands

- Press hands back toward your face
- As you get closer, pull your head back, away from your hands
- Rotate your palms to face away, inhale
- Repeat entire sequence



Press hands toward face and push head back – Bending at the elbows, push your palms toward your face, pulling your head backwards as though you are avoiding touching your face with your hands. Rotate your palms so they face away from you and you are now in the start position (except that your neck is pulled back). Exhale slowly as you do this.


Repeat the exercise. The goal is never to hold your breath at any point in the exercise. If it is too difficult to breathe aligned with the movements, just breathe deeply.

Don't lock your elbows – keep them relaxed.

Don't spread your arms out wider than your shoulder width.


Don't tilt your head backwards.

Time your breathing to end with the end of the movement.



Flexibility: Bow Stance

- Body aligned as described
- Back foot at 45 degrees
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Weight distributed 70/30 between both feet
- Knee behind front toe



Think about standing straddling a rectangle that is the width of your shoulders. Keep both feet shoulder width apart even though one foot is in front of the other. You should feel stable in this stance. If you feel unbalanced, it is likely that you have your heels on a straight line instead of shoulder width apart. The distance from your back to front foot may be shorter than shoulder width, depending on your size, strength, and ability level.

Flexibility: Sit Back Stance

- Body aligned as described
- Feet parallel
- Feet shoulder width apart
- Weight distributed 90/10 between both feet
- Both feet fully touch the floor



Reach behind and to the side with the other foot (to the side so your feet stay shoulder width apart). Touch your toe down. Roll down onto your back foot so that the back foot ends up at a 45-degree angle pointing outward, away from you. Then, sit back so your weight is primarily on that back foot. Leave the front foot flat on the floor. The weight is balanced about 90% on the back foot and 10% on the front foot. You may also start in a bow stance and simply “sit back”.

Flexibility: Spinning the Prayer Wheel

- Start in Sit Back Stance, elbows back, palms up
- Shift into Horse Stance with arms coming forward, inhale



Tips:

If you have trouble remembering this movement, think about scooping up a pile of laundry as you move forward into the bow stance.

Keep your hands relaxed and palms pointed up toward the ceiling. Keep your elbows in, close to your torso.

Breathe deeply in and out with the rhythm of the movements. Never hold your breath.

You are always breathing in or out.

Don't allow your front knee to move over the tip of your toe.

Don't lean forward as you shift 70% of your weight to the front foot.

Flexibility: Spinning the Prayer Wheel



- Sit back and pull hands to shoulders, exhale
- Rotate arms to the start position

The exercise is performed on a blue mat on a wooden floor. The woman is wearing a maroon t-shirt, grey leggings, and light blue sneakers. The background shows a room with wood paneling and a patterned chair.

Tips:

Breathe in as you go forward in the bow stance, and exhale as you sit back. Take slow deep breaths and time your movements with your breathing. You should never hold your breath: always either be exhaling or inhaling. Work to slow down your inhalation and exhalation. Slow and relaxed is the key to mastering this exercise.

You may repeat this exercise 10 – 15 times on one leg and then switch and place the other foot in front. If 10 – 15 times is too long, reduce the number. You may also switch back and forth between legs whenever you feel tired.

Flexibility: Hip Flexor Stretches

Knee to Chest

- Knee up
- Hold with hands, not interlaced fingers
- Toe down
- Heel is not on the chair!



RELAX the joint and let gravity work for you. If there is tension in the joint, the ligaments and tendons are engaged. They can't stretch if they aren't relaxed.

Do the stretch for a set period of time and keep it relatively short to start with (10 seconds is fine to start with). You can always add time.

Do the stretch at least twice with a 1 minute relaxation period in between. You will be able to stretch further the second time because you have already "pre-stretched" everything.

Do the stretches at least once a day. If you do this, you will see progress within a few weeks. You can do them twice a day if you like (morning and evening, for example).

Do not bounce the joint when you do these stretches or put a weight on the leg heavier than your hand. You can push gently with your hand if you want a deeper stretch, but no more.

Increase gradually. There is no magic number that works for everyone. Listen to your body.

Flexibility: Hip Flexor Stretches

Hamstrings

- Hold edge of chair
- Hold foot and point knee downward
- Brace with other foot



You can also hold onto the seat of the chair with the other hand. Be sure your front foot anchors your weight. You don't want to fall over.

Flexibility: Hip Flexor Stretches

Inner hip Flexors

- Cross leg at ankle
- Relax hip area
- If you want more stretch, rest your hands on your knee



If your knee is up high when you cross your ankle over your leg, you may need to put a pillow under the raised leg to help keep the stretch from being too deep. Use whatever props work for you to “prop up” that leg so you can relax the joint and let the tendons and ligaments gently stretch.

Never put a weight on the knee to stretch further. If you want a little more stretch, just rest your hands on your knee, as shown in the photo to the right. There is no need to press on it – just rest one or two hands there, that will sufficiently stretch it.

Flexibility: Front leg Stretch

- Extend front leg, resting on heel
- Slide down the leg
- Bend only at the hip joint
- Keep legs open at 90 degree angle
- Relax all muscles so the stretch is effective



Keeping your hips pointed toward your front, slide your hands down your outstretched leg. Relax your muscles, and hold yourself in place with your arms, not legs.

Strength: Feet, Ankles, and Legs

Foot Scrunches

- Place cloth under foot
- Lift and spread toes to grab it and pull it under your foot
- Repeat



According to Wikipedia, “the core of the body is broadly considered to be the torso. Functional movements are highly dependent on this part of the body, and lack of core muscular development can result in a predisposition to injury. The major muscles of the core reside in the area of the belly and the mid and lower back (not the shoulders), and peripherally include the hips, the shoulders and the neck.”

This is a strengthening exercise for your feet and ankle. It will also help strengthen your calf to a lesser extent.

Essentially, in this exercise, you are pulling a lightweight piece of fabric closer to you using your toes. Position your foot over a dishtowel or t-shirt. Spread your toes wide and let them grip the cloth. Pull it toward you and repeat.

Strength: Feet, Ankles, and Legs

Calf Raises

- Up and down, parallel
- Up and down, toes in
- Up and down, toes out



These are exercises for your calf, ankle, and feet. They strengthen all three and also help to stretch ligaments and tendons around your knees. To do this, sit in a chair with your feet relaxed and in front of you, flat on the floor. Then, lift your heels. There are three versions of this, each one uses your muscles, ligaments and tendons differently.

Strength: Feet, Ankles, and Legs

Leg Raises

- Lift leg up and off the chair slightly
- Straighten out the leg and hold for few seconds
- Raise and lower leg
- Repeat



Leg raises are strengthening exercises for your legs, stomach, back, and hips. Essentially, you sit in the chair and lift your leg up, off the chair, without leaning back in the chair. For some people, it is easier to sit on the edge of a chair to do this or the edge of a bed, so you are not tempted to lean back and brace yourself on the back of the chair.

Relax your arms. They can be braced behind your back, but that tempts most people to press back against them. So, the best option is to let them hang loosely at your sides. To protect your lower back, pull in your stomach and hold it in.

Strength: Qigong Moves

- Expand arms outward while rocking back
- Bring arms back while rocking forward
- Feel the stretch across your chest and arms



These four exercises are Qigong movements created by Master Li, the founder of Sheng Zhen Meditation. For more information about Master Li and how to study with a trained instructor, visit <http://www.shengzhenaustin.org/> .

Tips:

Sit near the edge of the chair so you have room to lean back.

Don't rest against the back of the chair. Use your core muscles to support your body.

Keep your feet planted on the floor in a Horse Stance position.

Holding the position for a few moments will work your muscles more. Build up to this.

Inhale sitting back; exhale coming forward.

Strength: Qigong Moves

- Push hands away while rocking back
- Bring arms in while rocking forward
- Feel the stretch across your shoulders and back



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Tips:

Sit near the edge of the chair so you have room to lean back.

Don't rest against the back of the chair. Use your core muscles to support your body.

Keep your feet planted on the floor in a Horse Stance position.

Holding the position for a few moments will work your muscles more. Build up to this.

Inhale sitting back; exhale coming forward.

Strength: Qigong Moves

- Push hands above your head, palms together
- Bring arms back down to finish the spinal stretch
- Slump down and relax your back and arms



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Tips:

Sit near the edge of the chair so you have room to lean back.

Don't rest against the back of the chair. Use your core muscles to support your body.

Keep your feet planted on the floor in a Horse Stance position.

A straight torso does not mean no curve to your back. Keep your shoulders over your hips.

Don't worry if you can't get your arms over your head.

Hold your arms up for a short time to increase the difficulty of the workout.

It is more important to have your palms together than to have your hands over your head.

Do not interlace your fingers. Hold your hands up using your muscles.

Keep your torso upright.

Relax between moves by shaking your arms.

Strength: Qigong Moves

- Second spinal stretch: Palms together
- Bend to one side, pointing elbow to ceiling
- Return to center and bend to other side



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Tips:

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Don't worry if you can't get your arms over your head.

Hold your arms up for a short time to increase the difficulty of the workout.

It is more important to have your palms together than to have your elbow pointed to the ceiling

Do not interlace your fingers. Hold your hands up using your muscles.

Keep your torso upright.

Relax between moves by shaking your arms.

Cool Downs: Walk



- Seated alternate: Relax legs, open and close and gently shake arms

After exercise, it is important to do gentle cool downs, regardless of the level of exercise accomplished. Cool downs are not a complete cessation of exercise. Instead, they are gentle movements designed to ease your body into a more restful state after exercise and prevent muscle stiffness. Think of it as allowing your car to slow down gradually when approaching a stop instead of approaching at full speed and stomping on the brakes. Both actions achieve the goal of stopping, but one is harder on the car/body. Instructors may use whatever cool downs they prefer.

Walk – alternate pictured: sit and open and close legs and gently shake the arms. Stay relaxed.

Cool Downs: Twist Body



- Twist body back and forth
- Can be done seated or standing

Turn your torso gently to point your belly button 45 degrees off your centerline. Then turn to the opposite direction, again, 45 degrees off your centerline. Continue this movement from side to side slowly gaining speed. If your arms are correctly hanging loosely from your shoulders, they will start to swing as you pick up speed.

Once you have gained a good speed and the arms are swinging quickly, start to slow down again until your arms stop moving on their own. If you are seated, you can now rest your back against the chair as you finish.

Breathe deeply throughout this exercise. Do not consciously direct the movement of your arms. Just let them move with your turning torso.

Cool Downs: Breathing Exercise

- Horse Stance
– arms up and then rotate hands
- May be done seated or standing
- Inhale deeply going up and rotating the palms



Cool Downs: Breathing Exercise



- Raise arms over head, exhale
- Press down to upper body point, inhale
- Press down to lower body point, exhale
- Repeat 3 times

This presentation is provided courtesy of Dr. Suzanne Droleskey, Texas A&M University

Final Thoughts

- Practice on your own, to the best of your ability
- Do nothing that causes pain
- Consult with a physician if you are unsure how an exercise is impacting you
- Many exercises may be done seated as you build up strength and flexibility





Please take a moment to provide feedback on this program.

1. Regarding the **overall program/teaching** (rate your response by circling a number):

Statement	Scale (1= Worst, 5 = Best)				
The value of the lesson was	1 not valuable	2	3	4	5 very valuable
The overall teaching was	1 poor	2	3	4	5 excellent
The teacher's knowledge of the lesson was	1 poor	2	3	4	5 excellent

2. Regarding **what you know and actions you plan to take** (circle your response):

- I learned new information today. YES NO
- I plan to use the information I learned today personally. YES NO
- I understand how Tai Chi movement & practice benefits health. YES NO
- I gained enough to teach basic balance, flexibility & strength movements. YES NO
- I can find resources to share the basic movements with others. YES NO

3. This lesson was delivered by a(n) (check only one):

_____ TEEA Member. _____ Extension Agent/Specialist _____ Other Speaker.

4. Please tell us about yourself.

I am a _____ Woman. _____ Man.

I am in District: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

I have been a member of TEEA for _____ years.

My age is _____ years-old.

5. Additional Comments.

Thank You For Completing This Form!