

# Traditional Warm-Ups for T'ai Chi

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*Most are done 4 times in each direction. Stretches are held for a count of 4.*

**Opening the neck** While inhaling, raise both arms slowly to shoulder height. Turn palms toward you and pull them close to the chin, as if pushing it back. While exhaling, turn palms away from you and push them forward and then downward. Release the chin and follow your hands with your head, bringing the chin toward the chest.

**Ear to shoulder** Leave the shoulder low and relaxed.

**Shoulder shrugs** Circle the shoulders, first one at a time and then both together, forward and back.

**Energy field** Circle the head with the hands, staying close to the head.

**Wrist and finger rolls** First rotate the wrists outward and—starting with the little fingers—use the fingers one at a time. Then rotate inward, starting with the index fingers and turning the backs of the hands toward each other.

**Brush the chin** Stretch the hands out in front, palms down. Bring them into the chin and circle outward and forward to return to the starting position. After 4, turn the palms up; circle out first; then come into the chin where you turn the palms down, and return to the starting position. Palms up to begin again.

**Down scoop** Starting with the palms up, drop the arms and circle back up. Then turn the backs of the hands toward each other and pull back as if doing breast stroke.

**Side to side flowing** Swing the arms loosely in a big figure “8.” Shift the weight from side to side, turn the waist, and use the shoulders. Keep the back straight and the head up.

**Windmills** With one hand on the stomach, swing the other arm forward and then back. Next use both arms together, forward and back.

**Eyes follow elbow** With hands on hips, turn back as far as possible while watching the elbow.

**Link thumbs** Link the thumbs together above the head. Swoop out and down toward the floor, then come up close to the body to get back to the starting position. Reverse this by keeping the hands close to the body as they go down and scooping away from the body as they return to the top.

**Fan the face** With palms facing you, cross the arms in front of the face and circle up, rising onto the toes as the arms go up. Then reverse the arm direction.

**Fan big** In a big movement that comes from the shoulders, circle and cross the arms in front. Jump off the ground as the arms go up. Then reverse the arm direction. Leave out the jump if you're avoiding impact exercise.

**Knee dips** In a 1 ½ -shoulder-width stance with toes facing front, dip the knee down over the toes. Next turn sideways. Bend the front knee and keep the back leg straight to stretch the calf and Achilles tendon. This stretch should be held for a count of 12.

**Rub hands together 36 times**

**Massage face and neck**

**Hip rolls** Make as big a circle as you can, keeping the head in place.

**Lower back push** Place the palms on the lower back, fingertips pointing down. Keep the neck and spine lined up and push to the side, front, side, and circle the hips around to the back to start again. Do 2 circles in each direction. Exhale with each push.

**Knee rolls** Place hands on bent knees. Try to keep the feet flat on the floor.

**Balancing on one leg: Paw the air** Circle one leg forward and then back.

**Circle at the knee** Trace a circle close to the ground, first in front and then behind.

**Circle at the ankle** Do this to the front and to the back.

**Kick** With arms swinging, kick up and touch the knee or the toe with the opposing hand—8 times on each side. Step down after each kick if you need to.

**Advance** Stand with feet planted at shoulder width, toes pointed forward. Turn the waist so you're facing to the side, then shift the weight and advance—6 times to each side. Let the feet pivot if you need to protect your knees.

**Retreat** Same as above, but shift onto the back leg as if retreating. Avoid leaning back.

**Squat down** Let the head droop down toward the floor. Hold this for a while.

*For the continuing class:*

**Double tap the lotus toe** Hold the hands out at shoulder height on one side and put the weight on the other-side leg. Circle the empty leg in across the body and tap the foot or knee with both hands—one after the other—as the arms move across to the other side. The leg has to start moving before the arms.

**Snaking down** Stand with the feet wide apart, one foot turned out 45 degrees, the other planted and facing front. Hold the hands in the ready position and take the knee down over the angled toe. Keep the other leg straight. Face front. Then come back up and rearrange your feet to do the same on the other side.