



Linda's Tai Chi Community Weekly Handout
March 2, 2025

Various Hand Positions

The position of the hands is essential to our performance of Tai Chi and Qigong. The position of the hands have a specific purpose. When we start out learning Tai Chi and Qigong, we concentrate on 5 hand positions:

Open palm- palm is up facing the blue sky or facing outward (Yang)

Closed palm- palm is facing downward to the earth (yin)

Palm facing your eyes- leading with the knuckles as in ward off

Pushing or pressing palm- slight bend in the wrist as you push the palm outward or away from your body; palms facing outward

The Claw or plum blossom- this position takes us into single whip in the first set and following sets. Bend the right wrist gently downward, all fingers fold gently and touch the thumb. Notice the right hand of the performer below:



The claw, hook or plum blossom – all fingers touch the thumb. The back of the hand is used to ward- off or to block

Furthering our discussion of hand positions - even if the hand or palm is in a resting or inactive position, it has a function and therefore carries energy. The hand or palm never dangles or floats off into space. Purpose and intention always.

Here are some hand positions we are using in all sets:

Normal Hand- “The Position of Functioning “



This is the most common hand position. It is relaxed with just enough energy in it to keep it aware. In all martial arts the use of an open hand technique is your “at ready” hand. “Peng energy” is an upward and forward energy.

This hand position is the “position of functioning. A hand is in the normal posture if it is waiting to do something, or if the other hand is involved in activity and it is just relaxing. This posture is used between movements as a transitional hand posture. This hand position is soft but not limp, firm but not tense. If you have ever worn a cast or had your hand wrapped, the thumb is always kept free to keep the position of functioning. It is softly rounded as if you are holding a grapefruit or an orange like this:



Your Position of Functioning

Musicians know this hand position very well. It is the position of the hand when playing an instrument.

Tiger's Mouth (Neutralizing, pulling, grabbing, twisting)



This hand posture is quite open, with a large open space between the thumb and index finger. This space between the thumb and fore finger is the Hegu or Tiger's Mouth. The Tiger's Mouth gives us the ability to grasp and clasp things between the thumb and other fingers and has allowed humans to reach the top of the survival pyramid. This posture is very active, ready to grab and turn. Examples are the left hand in Left Brush Knee, the pulling hand in Repulse Monkey, the right hand in High Pat on Horse.

We use this position when we "spread our wings" in the beginning of our heart kidney Qigong routine.

Pushing Hand and Neutralizing Hand



Probably the most common active hand posture, the pushing or neutralizing hand is an intermediate step between the Relaxed Hand and the Tiger's Mouth. It is soft enough to be able to mold to the surface it is attached to, yet firm enough to transmit solid energy. The thumb is held closer to the palm than Tiger's Mouth, and the fingers have a bit more spread than a Striking Palm. Examples include Push, Withdraw and Push, Brush Knee, play the guitar.

Chopping Hand or Cut Like Knife



The fingers of this posture are held together firmly, have lots of peng energy, and the thumb is tucked firmly into the palm. The energy is concentrated on the edge of the hand that is used to do the chopping, and can be done in an upward or downward motion. An example of downward chop is Deflect Downward and an example of upward chop is Slanting Flying. End of Heaven and Earth.

Finger Poke Hand



The hand is held very firmly, fingers straight, thumb tucked tightly into palm. It is very important for the forearm, wrist, palm, and fingers to line up straight, as the poke puts a great deal of stress on the joints if not in line. Examples include Needle At Sea Bottom and White Snake Puts Out Tongue (left hand) or Monkey presents fruit; hands glide like silk

Back of Hand Striking Hand



This is a very difficult hand posture to master as the area of energy release is quite limited due to the fact that the bones on the back of the hand are quite close to the surface and therefore easily broken or damaged if not used

correctly. This posture is used mostly to stun or distract, focused generally on the face and especially the nose. The shape is rather round with most of the energy in the knuckle region. An example is White Snake.

Fist



The fist is used in many ways in Tai Chi. One can punch, chop, use front, back, sides. Knuckles can protrude to concentrate energy into small areas. The most common fist is the straight punch, like in Step Up, Parry, and Punch.

Be sure to close the **fist firmly but not too tightly**. The energy for the most effective forward punch comes from the two large knuckles of the index and middle fingers. Be sure to line up the forearm, wrist, and hand so that all force comes from the back and nothing will bend out of shape when the force is released. When we punch in Tai Chi, we usually use a half twist (ending with the thumb of the punching fist facing upward) to help focus and concentrate the energy. We don't use a full twist (ending with the fingers of the punching fist facing down) as that puts a lot of stress on the connective tissues of the shoulder, elbow, and wrist.

Hook Hand or Claw (In Qigong, this is called Plum Blossom (I sometimes refer to this as “Karate Kid’ from the Movie



This is the position for Single Whip. It is a very versatile tool used for striking mainly sides but also knuckles, wrist area, and back of hand, poking (fingers concentrate energy into a small area), neutralizing (fingers wrap mainly around wrist of opponent). See above in the first photo that demonstrates the Claw of in Qigong , the Plum Blossom.

Let's now look at some of the Tai Chi movements and see how these hand postures fit in. This is written in the first person from the fighter POV



Step Back and Repulse Monkey

The left hand is a striking palm while the right hand is in tiger's mouth. I could easily grab his right wrist with my right hand, but, since he is holding tightly onto my wrist, I just need to withdraw my arm and he is closed up and vulnerable to my palm strike.



I am using a neutralizing palm with my right hand, pressing slightly down and in, while I poke with my left hand.

You can see if I used a Tiger's Mouth with the left hand, the thumb might get in the way and dissipate the energy



Single Whip

I have many applications for Single Whip. Here I use a Tiger's Mouth to grab his left wrist with my left hand and strike his ribs with my hook hand.



White Snake Puts Out Tongue

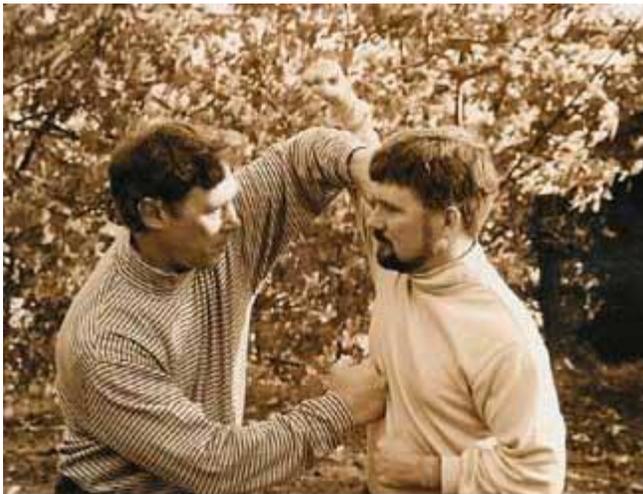
I use a neutralizing hand with my left hand and strike with a back hand slap with my right hand to my opponent's nose.

The bridge of the nose is an excellent target for this tool as it doesn't take a lot of force to cause pain.



Fan Through the Back

I use a Tiger's Mouth with my right hand to grab and pull a bit in order to open his rib area so I can strike with a striking hand. I could use a fist also with good results.



Strike Tiger

This is an interesting movement. I am blocking his right hook punch with my left arm. This is called a blocking punch because I am punching his right temple at the same time I am blocking. It takes some practice to use blocking punches, but once mastered, they are very effective.

My right fist punches his center. This is a very powerful punch – short range with the entire body behind it.

You will see some practitioners do this movement punching both fists at the same time. I like to do the left arm just slightly before the right.



High Pat on Horse

High Pat uses a left-hand Tiger's Mouth for a grabbing neutralize as I slap my opponent's left ear with my right hand.

I could have used a neutralizing hand on his left punch, but my slap is much more effective when I add a slight pull to his wrist, upsetting his root and balance.

Paying attention to the changes in hand postures will help you focus and keep your mind from wandering thereby increasing the generation of Chi.

For those of you interested in self-healing, changing hand postures causes a greater variety of energy transmission pathways and mind/body interaction, both of which lead to improvements in health

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Peace, Linda