

The Eight Pieces of Brocade (Ba Duan Jin)

The Baduanjin (The Eight Pieces of Brocade) as a whole is broken down into eight separate exercises, each focusing on a different physical area and qi meridian. The Baduanjin traditionally contains both a standing and seated set of eight postures each. In the modern era, the standing version is by far the most widely practiced. The particular order in which the eight pieces are executed sometimes varies, with the following order being the most common.

Ba Duan Jin (The Eight Pieces of Brocade) was developed during the twelfth century by the famous general Yueh Fei as a way to strengthen the body, to balance the vital functions and to drive stagnant energy and toxins from the system. Baduanjin is a very popular qigong set, ideal for beginners. Although simple, these exercises have a lot to offer. By involving your mind in your qigong practice you will get their full benefits. But, even by practicing the set as simple physical exercises, the Baduanjin routine will loosen your muscles, improve your posture, enhance your blood circulation, and relax you. Each exercise should be repeated 12 times. You may start off with 6 times each and add more repetitions. The ancient texts recommend 24 to 36 repetitions each.

1. Two Hands Hold up the Heavens (Shuang Shou Tuo Tian)

This move is said to stimulate the "Triple Warmer" meridian (Sanjiao). It consists of an upward movement of the hands, which are loosely joined and travel up the center of the body.

Stand in the Horse Stance, empty the lungs and relax. Inhale and raise the hands palms up slowly. When the palms reach heart level turn them around to face upwards and continue raising them. Palms are raised to heaven upon completion of inhalation. Stretch all the way up lifting the heels off the ground. Exhale smoothly while bringing back the arms slowly down to the sides and lower both heels to return to a standing position with hands relaxed at the sides.

Benefits: Balances energy in all the internal organs (The Triple Burner refers to the Heart, Lungs and Stomach).

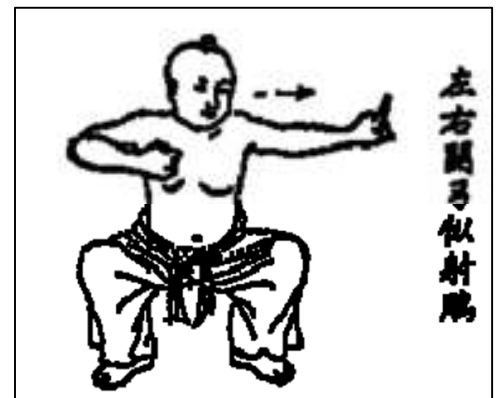


2. Drawing the Bow to Shoot the Hawk (or Vulture)

While in a lower horse stance, the practitioner imitates the action of drawing a bow to either side. It is said to exercise the waist area, focusing on the kidneys and spleen.

Stand in a lower Horse Stance. Relax your hands and lift them up to the chest area. As you breathe in, push out with one hand while pulling back the other as though shooting with a bow and arrow. Repeat the procedure for both sides. Breathe in when pulling back breathe out when returning to the center.

Benefits: Realigns the back muscles and the spine and strengthens the muscles of the arms abdomen, back and legs. Promotes overall good health and vitality.



3. Separate Heaven and Earth

This resembles a version of the first piece with the hands pressing in opposite directions, one up and one down. A smooth motion in which the hands switch positions is the main action, and it is said to especially stimulate the stomach.

Stand in the Horse. Bring the hands below the navel with palms facing up the sky. Inhale while raising both hands together up to heart level. When the hands reach the heart and the breath is full, turn one palm out and around 360 degrees so that it faces the sky and continue raising it, and turn the other palm in and around 180 degrees so that it faces the ground and bring it down. Exhale while you turn both palms around and slowly bring them back to heart level. Breath and reverse sides.

Benefits: Invigorates the torso with energy from the heavens and from the earth. Opens the chest for deeper breathing.

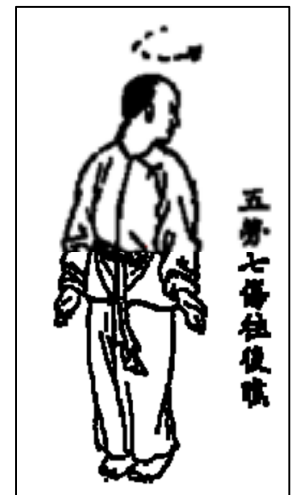


4. Wise Owl Gazes Backwards or Look Back

This is a stretch of the neck to the left and the right in an alternating fashion.

Stand upright, feet together and look to the far distance. Breath in. Turn the head to one side following with eyes to look behind you. Keep the trunk of the body straight. Repeat this head turning routine for both sides. Breathe out when turning, breathe in when returning.

Benefits: Exercises the neck and eyes muscles, releases tension. Nourishes the internal organs with vital energy and freshly oxygenated blood.



5. Sway the Head and Shake the Tail

This is said to regulate the function of the heart and lungs. Its primary aim is to remove excess heat (or fire) (xin huo) from the heart. Xin huo is also associated with heart fire in traditional Chinese medicine. In performing this piece, the practitioner squats in a low horse stance, places the hands on thighs with the elbows facing out and twists to glance backwards on each side.

Stand in a low Horse Stance. Place your hands on top of your knees. Shift your weight to your left leg and press down heavily with your haTurn your head to the left side and look backward while extending your right leg. Repeat the same thing on the other side.

Benefits: Expels Fire Energy from the system by drawing it out through the lungs and energy gates.

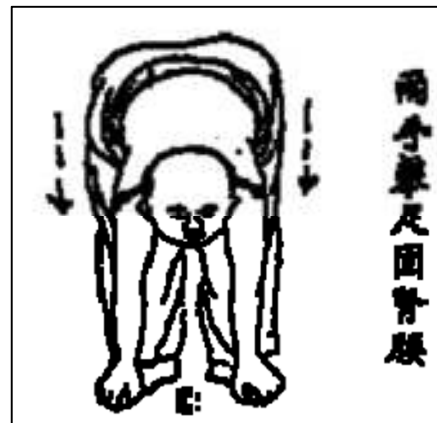


6. Two Hands Hold the Feet to Strengthen the Kidneys and Waist

This involves a stretch upwards followed by a forward bend and a holding of the toes.

Stand in the Horse. Exhale slowly through the mouth, lean forward and bend down. Inhale and rise slowly, raising your arms upward over your head, with the palms facing each other. Exhale smoothly, relax the shoulders while bringing the arms down the sides with the palms down and turned outward. Inhale in the Horse Stance.

Benefits: Stretches and tones the entire spinal column. Promotes the circulation of freshly oxygenated blood to the brain. Balances energy flow between the front and back and the upper and lower parts of the body.



7. Clench the Fists and Glare Fiercely (or Angrily)

This resembles the second piece, and is largely a punching movement either to the sides or forward while in horse stance. This, which is the most external of the pieces, is aimed at increasing general vitality and muscular strength.

Stand in a lower Horse Stance. Hold your fists beside your waist. Extend one arm to the side in a twisting punch motion. Glare fiercely at an imaginary opponent. Imagine that energy is projected from the fist. your other hand stay beside your waist in a tight fist. Bring the extended arm back, repeat on the other side. Exhale as you punch, inhale as the arm moves back.

Benefits: Angry and tense feelings are dispelled. Additional oxygen is supplied to the blood.



8. Bouncing on the Toes

This is a push upward from the toes with a small rocking motion on landing. The gentle shaking vibrations of this piece is said to "smooth out" the qi after practice of the preceding seven pieces.

Stand in the Horse and look straight in the distance. Let your arms hang loosely at your sides. Make sure your shoulders are relaxed, and empty your mind of all thoughts. Lift the heels off the ground as you inhale. Remain stable using the toes for balance. Lower the heels back to the ground as you exhale. Repeat the procedure breathing in when lifting the heels and breathing out when lowering them.

Benefits: Generates waves of energy, improves blood flow to the internal organs, which helps detoxify them. Enhances the balance and coordination. Draws terrestrial energy up from the earth through the Bubbling Spring on the soles.

