



Bonus Class: Internal to External

A fun class option

This is a fun class to teach. It really has nothing to do with providing the many internal benefits of tai chi. It is about the external and stylistic points of the form.

It is a good class to teach every once in awhile, however, because your students will enjoy it and they will gain an understanding of tai chi as a martial arts performance.

As you remember, the 24 Forms short form was created by the communist government by taking pieces of the long form and standardizing the flow. It is a competition form and as such, you should begin and end in approximately the same spot.

BONUS CLASS

Focus: External Style and end up in the same place as beginning Postures 1-24

Teaching points:

Stride length needs to be consistent in all of the moves. People tend to take longer steps when they are moving forward and smaller steps when they are going backward or to the side. This obviously becomes a problem if you are to end up in the same place that you begin.

Using brush knee and part the wild horse's mane, have students move forward and note their stride length. Then have them do repulse the monkey and note thief stride length again. Most students will notice a smaller step as they move backwards. Challenge them to adjust their stride lengths to be consistent by either shortening their forward steps or lengthening their backwards steps. Have them practice wave hands like clouds and snake creeps, pheasant stands as well to measure their sideways movements.

The movement pattern in the form should also become a herringbone type of pattern. Create rows on your floor that are about 2 feet wide. As your students move forward with brush knee, part the wild horse's mane and fair lady works the shuttle, encourage them to step to the left edge of the row when their left foot is forward and to the right edge of the row when their right foot is forward.

Forward creep is also a problem with the form if you are trying to get back to where you started. Using the rows and practicing the herringbone pattern will help with this. There is one point in particular, however, that is a major contributor to this forward creep. It is when you set your foot down after kick, smash and box the ears. If you maintain a slight diagonal and place your foot to the right edge of your row, you will be able to turn around and kick left and still be in your row. If you place your foot too far forward, however, when you turn around, you will suddenly be in the row in front of you! This same creep may also occur after pick the needle up from the sea bottom and you turn to the back again. Be careful to maintain your herringbone positions with your row.

Warm-ups: 20 minutes

- Step side to side and lift
- Chi walking
- Brush knee
- Part the wild horse's mane
- Fair lady works the shuttle
- Wave hands like clouds

- Snake creeps, pheasant stands
- Kick, smash and box the ears
- Pick the needle up from the sea bottom

Form practice: 20 minutes

Practice the entire form 4 times through. Have students mark their starting point somehow. Challenge them to end up close to that spot. Have them evaluate their stride lengths and step patterns if they are not getting back to their starting point. Encourage them to pay attention to their transitions and try to make it a performance.

Keep it light and fun! Remember that we aren't really going to be competing with this form!

Cool-downs: 5 minutes

- Pushing chi
- Chi walking
- Heaven and earth