

Class #1

Focus:

Pushing Chi

Brush Knee

Ward Off, Grasp Bird's Tail

Teaching Points:

Hold the ball

When you step side to side, try to feel the weight shift. As you hold the ball on the right, make sure your right elbow is relaxed and down. Don't let the arm become parallel to the floor. This will make your shoulders very tired and tense. Remember we want the body to be relaxed to allow the energy to flow. Think about the same thing when you hold the ball on the left.

Chi Walking

The weight shift now becomes forward and back instead of side to side like Hold the Ball. Concentrate on completely shifting the weight before you move forward. It's as if water is flowing from one leg into the other leg and you don't move the back leg forward until it is completely empty. Don't rush your steps and don't overstride. If you take too long of a step, it will be very difficult to maintain your balance and keep the water flowing. Keep your head up and your eyes focused on the horizon. There is no need to look down at your feet! I promise you, they will stay right at the bottom of your ankles! And again, take it nice and slow. Chi walking is the basis of all the movement in the form, so it is important to master this technique.

Pushing Chi

The most important thing about Pushing Chi is to learn to move from the dan tian. As you begin, with one foot forward, put both hands on your hips and then simply rock forward and back so you get the feel of moving from your dan tian. This will help you avoid the temptation to move from your shoulders once you start moving your hands with this move. Since the breathing is very easy to add to this movement, you can incorporate the breathing pattern right away and it helps to relax the body. Breathe out as you push away from your body and breathe in as bring your hands towards your body. Don't allow your back heel to raise up off the ground as you push forward. Keep both feet grounded. This will challenge some people as they may have a very tight Achilles tendon. If you struggle with keeping your heel down,

shorten your stance a little at first. You will be able to lengthen that stance as you develop some flexibility in your foot and ankle.

Brush Knee

Thinking about the martial arts application of this move helps people remember what their hands are doing. For Brush Knee Left, your left hand is brushing across your left thigh in a low block and your right hand is “hitting” your opponent in the face or throat. First practice the move several times from a stationary position. In other words, don’t try to move forward until you have practiced the technique on both sides of your body from a stationary position. Then try to walk forward and alternate right and left. Once you get the pattern of switching from one side to the other, try to incorporate the “rocking” technique that is Chi Walking. This is often confusing for people as they are trying to think about a lot of things at once and trying to make their bodies do something they have never done before. Their hands are also beginning to cross the midline of the body which challenges the brain. Take it slowly and break it down as much as you need to. Do just the hands for awhile. Then add the steps. And then add the rocking back and forth as you move forward.

Ward Off Sequence

This is a long sequence with several separate moves, but it ends with Pushing Chi, which you have already learned. Take it piece by piece and add each move on only as you feel comfortable with the first moves. Always begin in the Hold the Ball position. As you step out into Ward Off, make sure you step a little bit behind and not directly to the side. Let’s say you are facing North and both feet are facing forward as you Hold the Ball Right. Step with your left foot so your toes are pointing West. To check if you have your foot in the right place, pull the left foot back to the right so your feet make a backwards “L” on the floor. Your left foot should be just behind your right heel and not in the center of your right foot. This is not part of the move . . . it’s just to make sure you have stepped a little behind with your left foot. This becomes important because as you start your Ward Off rotation, you will need to rotate your right foot so that the toes are almost facing West, just like the left foot. If you don’t rotate the right foot, you will feel an unnatural (and unnecessary) pull on your right knee. After you learn to put the moves together in the whole sequence, remember that your weight should be shifting back and forth throughout the sequence. Your focus should be on moving from the dan tian just like when you

are doing Pushing Chi by itself. Learn the whole sequence going to the left first before you try to learn it going to the right.

Warm ups: 2-3 minutes

- Hold the ball
- Chi Walking

Allow your students to practice these moves and emphasize the importance of these moves as they are the basis for all the movement in the form.

Move practice: 6-7 minutes each

- Pushing Chi
- Brush Knee
- Ward Off, Grasp Bird's Tail

Cool downs: 1-2 minutes

- Heaven and Earth

Homework: Practice the moves.