

What is Kung Fu?

Kung fu is a Chinese term that literally means “work + time = accomplishment.” Kung fu has come to mean the traditional martial forms and systems of China. The four main systems of traditional kung fu are called Shaolin, Tai Chi, Xing Yi and Bagua. Since the mid-twentieth century, these systems and forms have been reorganized into a highly athletic performance art known as Wushu, considered a national treasure by the Chinese government. These systems and forms progress from external -- "the energy of movement" to internal -- "the movement of energy," External training develops strength and agility. Internal training develops awareness, balance, control and cultivates “qi,” or stores energy.

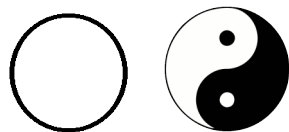
Northern Shaolin



Shaolin kung fu refers to the martial arts systems that were created in five different Chinese Buddhist temples over 1500 years ago. Northern Shaolin is the forerunner to all the many derivative styles that

developed through out the Far East. Also called long fist or chang ch’uan, it evolved in the vast Northern plains. These forms heat the body up quickly to withstand the harsh weather conditions and traverse big, open spaces. The movements are fully extended and dramatic, best learned from a young age while the bones are still soft. The stances are low and wide, with high kicks and jumps, and the steps are big strides. The spirit in the forms is expansive and courageous. Like ballet is to dance, it is foundation training for all of the other styles. The extreme range of motion makes it possible to perform any other martial art. The Classics say: **“You cannot enter the gates of T’ai Chi till you pass through the halls of Shaolin.”**

T’ai Chi



T’ai Chi means “grand ultimate.” The empty circle (wu ji) is divided by the yin/yang. The yin/yang, or T’ai Chi symbol represents the intersection of opposing forces resulting in perpetual change and motion in the universe. The main qualities that characterize T’ai Chi are: relaxation, light stepping & slow, synchronized movements that radiate from the waist. T’ai Chi can be practiced at any age, young or old, and is very therapeutic. Practicing T’ai Chi improves circulation, balance, bone density, immunity, longevity and awareness. T’ai Chi has been called

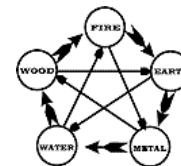
“martial qigong” because it heals, rejuvenates, and teaches fighting at the same time. “Original Yang,” or Guang Ping Yang style, takes 20 minutes to perform and contains deeper, more empowering movements than contemporary, derivative styles.

Qigong



Qigong means “energy work.” When you practice qigong, you are cultivating qi, but with no martial intent. Qigong supports T’ai Chi training (or any type of exercise), because it opens the channels, or energy pathways through which energy moves. Some qigong forms are gentle and relaxing and others, intense and invigorating. Some use breathing techniques; the “Buddhist breath,” or diaphragmatic breathing, and some use the “Taoist breath,” or longevity breathing. Some qigong forms are entirely still and move energy with pure thought.

Xing Yi



Xing Yi means “mind intent.” It is based on the 5 Chinese elements: metal, water, wood, fire and earth, and the 12 animals: dragon, bear, tiger, horse, monkey,

turtle, snake, eagle, hawk, dove, rooster, and sparrow. Xing Yi forms evoke the feeling of natural forces and animals, rather than imitate their appearance. There are solo and 2 person fighting forms in this simple and direct system, with straight-line attacks that are aggressive and abrupt. Xing Yi connects the body and spirit and trains the student to respond without thinking. It is best taught after Shaolin and T’ai Chi, when the student has gained more self-control.

Bagua



Bagua means 8 trigrams, the solid and broken lines that surround the T’ai Chi symbol. They represent the divisions of yin and yang, some more yin than and some more yang than yin. Bagua is full of twists, turns and movements that stimulate the glands. Intricate footwork and spinal twists causes sudden changes in direction that disrupt the opponent’s postural alignment, causing him or her to be thrown. While training, a pole (or tree) in the center helps keeps the eyes focused, the waist twisted, the chest hollow and the stepping circular. This system is best learned after all the others because it is more difficult, and contains movements from Shaolin, T’ai Chi and Xing Yi.

