

Know your Duan Wei

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Oftentimes we hear someone addressed as a Sifu or master in Chinese [Martial Arts](#). But do they really live up to the name? Some people say that learning [Tai Chi](#) is like peeling an onion and there are layers after layers. Do you ever wonder which layer you are at? In the Western education system, we go through elementary school, middle school, high school, college, and post-graduate school and it is easy for a student to set a goal; in many professions, a standard is established and there are certificates for various level of expertise. For a long time, Chinese Martial Art practitioners as well as Tai Chi enthusiasts have hoped for a system that can evaluate their skill and knowledge level. The good news is that after working on a standard for over a decade, Chinese Physical Education Bureau completed a Duan Wei system that can certify practitioners both inside and outside of China. On Aug. 12, Chinese Physical Education Bureau sent a proclamation to all provincial and city governments as well as all levels of military and education authorities to outline how to promote and enforce the Duan Wei system.



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Violet Li

Last month, I had a rare opportunity to interview Professor Kang Ge Wu, Chairman of the Chinese [Wushu](#) (Martial Arts) Association's Duan Wei Office to understand the importance of the Duan Wei system and its features.

To ensure Chinese Martial Arts standard, Chinese Physical Education Bureau has collaborated with Chinese Wushu Association and other authorities to design a Duan Wei system. This may sound like a simple task but it turned out to be a monumental effort considering there are thousands of martial art styles belonging to one hundred twenty nine martial art systems and it was challenging to categorize and find a common ground to standardize them. The initial research work started in 1998 but only in 2008 did the national standardization begin to take shape. Now major martial art systems Shaolin, Long Fist, Tai Chi/Taiji, Bagua, Xingyi, Baji, Tongbei, Praying Mantis, Wing Chun, Wuzhu, Fanzi, and Chuo Jiao have standards established. Regardless of martial art systems, they are divided into nine levels or Duan Weis. Applicants of Duan Wei need to have both skill and knowledge about the art he practices. For advanced Duan Weis (Seven, Eight, and Nine), age is also a factor in addition to one's contribution to promote the art. You have to be 45 or older to apply for the seventh Duan, 52 or older for the eighth Duan, and 60 and older for the ninth Duan.

For the category of Tai Chi Chuan, traditional Chen, Yang, Wu/Hao, Wu, Sun, and He styles have standards established and belong to the Duan Wei system. If you practice any of these six authentic styles (not the modified one nor simplified one), you can check with your teacher or your teacher's teacher how to get certified. Actually within each Tai Chi family, there is a process for getting certifications. You can get a certification in China or overseas with your Tai Chi family organization. But in case you are not near any of the organizations, you can check with the Confucius Institute. You can

use this link <http://english.chinese.cn> to locate a Confucius Institute near you. Also, Confucius Institute does not only teach you Chinese language, it can also teach you [Kung Fu](#). If your local Confucius Institute does not offer martial art classes yet, Professor Kang said that you can make a request. Once the interest is sufficient, they will send instructor(s) from China to teach.

Duan Wei system is a new Chinese policy mandated from the central government to improve citizens' health and maintain a standard of China's legacy. There is a ten-year execution plan to ensure schools at all levels will implement it. Budget will be appropriated for the central, provincial, city, and local governments to promote martial arts and carry out the Duan Wei system. There are emblems designed for different Duan Weis and uniforms made for ranking officials. An official website (<http://dw.wushu.com.cn/index.asp>) provides training material, rules, regulations, organizations, communications, forms download, news, and statistics of rankings. I was surprised to find a list of international practitioners who were certified in 2011 <http://dw.wushu.com.cn/NewsView.asp?ID=280>. To learn more about Duan Wei system, you can use a link here <http://dw.wushu.com.cn/NewsList.asp?SortID=15>

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