

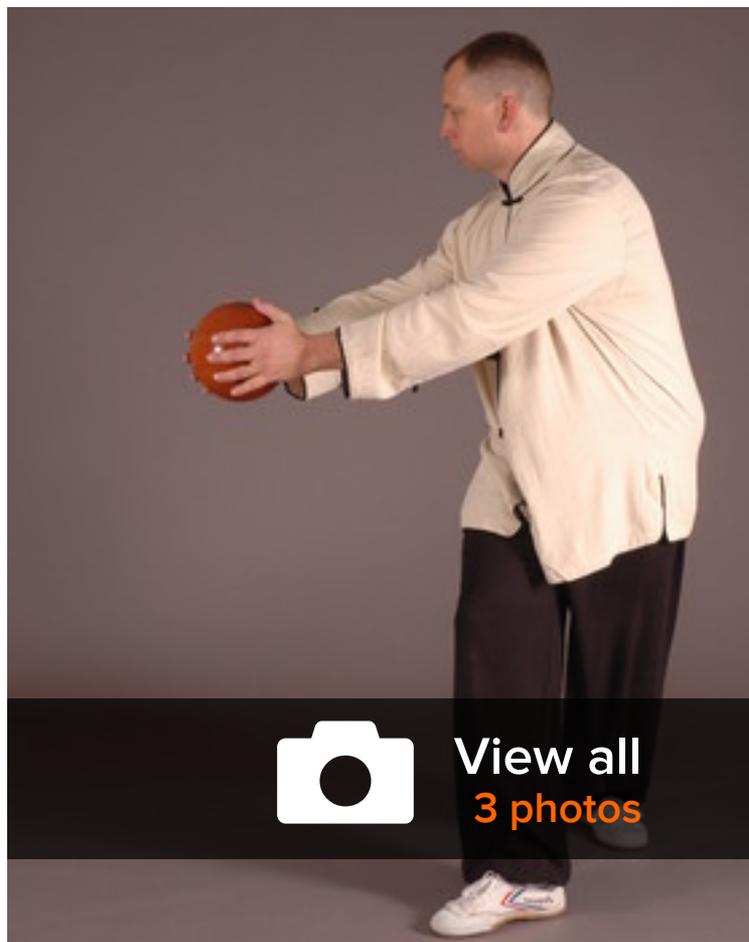
SPORTS / RECREATION / COMBAT SPORTS

Must Try: Tai Chi Ball

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If, like me, you want to have Push Hands training but no one to push with, or you want to enhance your Push Hands skill by developing your overall power (energy and muscular strength) and sensitivity in sizing up an opponent, then [Tai Chi Qigong](#) Ball training is a regimen to try.



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David Grantham and Tai Chi Qigong Ball
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Dr. Yang Jwing-Ming, the world renowned martial art master in both external and internal arts, has revived this almost lost martial art and put his years of knowledge and experience together in a recently published book titled *Tai Chi Ball Qigong* with his disciple David Grantham.

Push Hands is an internal martial art for self-defense and combat situations. Push Hands utilizes all the principles and movements one study from the solo Tai Chi form practice, but in a one-on-one competing setting with an opponent. Some people consider Push Hands is an ultimate test of one's Tai Chi skill. In Tai Chi practice, one tends to build up Qi (energy) instead of Li (muscle power). There is a saying that a good Tai Chi practitioner can use four ounces of Li (muscle power) to deflect a thousand pounds of the oncoming force; still, most practitioners before reaching that mastery still rely on some Li in a Push Hands competition. And a person with mightier muscle strength can take down an opponent even though both practitioners possess the same level of Tai Chi skill. Tai Chi Qigong Ball training offers a complete system, which guides the practitioners to build both Qi and Li. In other word, the Tai Chi Ball training is a mixture of developing both the internal gong (nei gong) and the external gong (wai gong).

Dr. Yang has written many books on Qigong. This book probably is the most profound and includes explanations of how Qigong works from the perspective of the Yin and Yang theory. He further explicates the different Qigong breathing types and their techniques, which help to clear up some confusion for many practitioners. He includes photos and diagrams in the book to guide the readers breathe properly. Besides regulating the body and the breathing, Dr. Yang also emphasizes the importance of regulating the Mind, the Qi, and the Spirit. He puts together exercise for practitioners to develop the internal gong.

According to Dr. Yang, Tai Chi Ball Qigong existed in almost all the martial art styles before the Chinese Song Dynasty (960 – 1280 A.C.E.), and it was kept secret and was not widely taught to outsiders. Dr. Yang recommends choosing a Tai Chi ball made of a natural material, i.e. wood or rock. Wood is better for Qi transmission while rock is more suitable for developing the physical strength. For a beginner, a wood ball, 10 – 12 inches in diameter with the weight of 4 – 8 pounds are ideal. As one becomes more proficient and stronger, he can opt for a heavier and/or bigger ball to practice.

David Grantham demonstrates and explains how Tai Chi Qigong ball movements are conducted step-by-step. Before practicing with a ball, there are four basic stances, namely Horse Stance, Mountain Climbing Stance (or Bow and Arrow Stance), Sitting on Crossed Leg Stance, and Four-Six Stance one should work on. It is important to distinguish the Yin and Yang or weight distribution for each of the stances. There are three basic hand movements: Circling, Rotating, and Wrap-coiling. Each hand movement has a Yin approach as well as a Yang approach. Once you get a good handle of a ball on a stationary post, then you can do it in a rocking motion. It gets tough when you step back and forth while circling, rotating, or wrap-coiling a ball. Bagua Stepping makes it even more challenging.

After you train yourself with the sensitivity of the ball, and you know how to listen to the Jin, adhere to the Jin, and follow the Jin, you can be creative and have some fun. Dr. Yang suggests a few applications or games for you to play, i.e. “Flying Dragon Plays with the Ball”, “Walking along the Edge”. But be careful with a ball if you are not present or mindful as you practice the movements, you can drop the ball and risk injury. Of course, you really need to be focusing the ball when you are playing with a partner with just one ball. It can be fun and exciting even for spectators.

Listening to the Jin, adhering to the Jin, and following the Jin are the essential skills for Push Hands. Without doubt, Dr. Yang’s Tai Chi Qigong Ball training method unlocks the secret passage to developing a higher level of Qi and Li, and it is a great method to elevate one’s Push Hands skill.

Dr. Yang studied a 24-movement Tai Chi Ball Form from an older gentleman Mr. Zhao in Taiwan in the late 1960’s. Since then, he has expanded the form to 48 movements. He encourages other practitioners to create new movements and applications once they learn Tai Chi Ball, so this art can sustain and flourish. His wish is to “preserve the past, value the present, and create the future” with the help of all Tai Chi and Qigong enthusiasts.

Note: You can order a Tai Chi ball by clicking the [link](#) here.

Now you can follow me on Twitter <http://twitter.com/#!/TaichiExaminer> .

SUGGESTED LINKS

- **A great Yang style Tai Chi textbook by Master Yang, Jwing-Ming**
- **Kung Fu Body Conditioning**

➤ Kung Fu Body Conditioning

➤ A Comprehensive Review of Health Benefits of Qigong and Tai Chi



Violet Li

Tai Chi Examiner

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