

# Legacy American Martial Arts



## Tai Chi Student Handbook

## The Values and Philosophy of Legacy American Martial Arts

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Each person who becomes involved in the martial arts has a different objective: to improve his or her physical condition, to learn self-defense, or perhaps to improve self-discipline – to meet a mental as well as physical challenge. Each of these different goals, however, reflect one common thought: personal improvement. Because each student has different capabilities (mentally and physically), our instructors concentrate on individual progress. There are certain physical techniques and technical concepts that must be mastered as the student proceeds through the ranks – and some progress more quickly than others. Students are not compared to one another; each is judged according to the concept of “personal victory” – a measurement of individual improvement based on personal potential.

Because of the “personal victory” concept, our programs are exciting forms of mental and physical exercise for both children and adults. The current physical condition of the student is not an issue because personal improvement is the common goal. If the student is willing to attend classes two or three times per week, he or she will meet their goals, and they may receive additional benefits they never expected.

As students attend classes regularly, they prepare for periodic rank tests to achieve progressively higher ranks, signified by the color of the belt or sash worn with their uniform. Upon successfully testing through the color belt or sash ranks the student is awarded his or her First Degree Black Belt or Sash.

The beginning student often considers the Black Belt to be the ultimate goal, but the successful martial artists realize that their training actually began when they achieved that benchmark. The study during the early ranks teaches the student the fundamental techniques, theory, and movements needed for training. Each belt or sash is the beginning of a wonderful journey; it is not the destination.

This student handbook will acquaint you with our school’s general policies and procedures and answer many of your questions. Please take the opportunity, also, to meet with your instructors; they are committed to your success and will be pleased to answer additional questions and help you achieve your goals. Also, take time to meet and get to know your fellow students and training partners. As you train and progress in the martial arts your classmates will be there to support and push you. While the martial arts are an individual activity we train as a team. By helping others grow we are making ourselves and the team stronger!



Jena Bushey  
Chief Instructor



Jack Smail  
Head Instructor

# Tai Chi Program



**Ms. Jena Bushey, Head Instructor of Legacy's Tai Chi Program**

## Tai Chi Program

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Tai Chi Chuan, or Taiji quan, is a Chinese martial art that focuses on slow movement with minimal impact and meditation. It is known as a subtle, internal, soft art. Taekwondo relies on fast strikes and impact, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is a ground art, and both rely on active movement originating from the arms, legs, and external core muscles. Tai chi movement originates from internally, moving out, or from your connection to the earth, your roots. This can initially be a difficult concept to grasp, small movements without active tension of muscles. If you do not feel it right away, keep practicing the movement and it will come to you. Over time, Tai Chi can strengthen the joints, tendons and ligaments, improve mental focus and patience, improve cardiovascular health, decrease pain, and create a sense of well-being or calmness.

Tai Chi's origin is rooted in select families in China who passed their family style of Tai Chi down through the generations. The head of the AMAI Tai Chi program and Ms. Bushey's teacher, Master Amanda Olson, is a student of both the Chen and Yang family styles of Tai Chi. Our Tai Chi program teaches a mix of Yang and Chen family style curriculum. The Chen style is the oldest Tai Chi style, with coiling moves and fast transitions in speed between slow and very fast together with stamping moves and explosive releases of power known as *fajin*. Yang style, with more evenly paced flowing moves, is the second oldest and started as an offshoot of the Chen style. Yang style is probably the most common style in the west followed by Chen style. Our training program includes silk reeling, form, practical application, push hands, and qigong.

- Silk reeling exercises are used to strengthen the muscles used in Taiji movement which give it its characteristic flow.
- Beginners learn the Yang 24 form. Advanced students learn the Chen 48 form.
- Every movement in Tai Chi can have a defensive application, so we teach self defense using Tai Chi movement.
- Qigong translates to nurturing or exercising the chi, and involves meditative still poses, movement, and partner exercises.
- Push hands is the Tai Chi version of sparring, and is done starting with the fourth sash in the AMAI Tai Chi ranking system.

### *Search for the True Meaning*

*“Form without form; intention, without intention. Go beyond form and intention to search for the true meaning.”*

*Going slowly in Tai Chi shows us our intention. Slow practice of the body makes clear our intention and easily shows flaws in our movements.*

## Class Structure

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Taiji translates to “grand extreme”. Class begins with students entering the training floor and on their own assuming the *wuji* position. *Wuji* translates to “no extreme”, and it is believed that if we can not first appreciate stillness, we will never understand the miracle of movement. Students take this position to clear their mind of distractions from the world outside and ready their mind and body for training.

The class will then progress to basic qigong, temple exercises, and silk reeling exercises. These serve as both a warmup and a nurturing and strengthening of the chi to apply to form and application practice. While initially you may follow the pace of the instructor, eventually you will be able to do the movements from your internal core, or chi, and your roots.

During form and application practice, the class transitions into individual and small group attention from the instructor. This is a time to focus on your own development at your experience level and for the instructor to assist you in getting the most of your Taiji movement. Small groups enjoy the camaraderie and the chance to help each other in improving their movement.

The class will then regroup and continue with chi nurturing, be it through partner exercises, push hands for green sashes or above, or different forms of qigong. Class will end with the qigong form for gentle stretching and to reset the body and mind to go about your day.

Remember that the exercises in class are intended to be done with no strain or stress to the body. If you see other students bending their knees to a certain depth or raising their arms to a certain height, do not try to match them. Listen to your body and the key points of structure from the instructor, and you will over time be able to move bigger and with less effort. No pain, *all* gain!

## Etiquette and Protocol

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1. Every student will enter the floor and assume the wuji position at the start of class.
2. If a student is late for class, s/he should quietly join the class without disturbing other students. We train that while in meditation or taiji training, one should be aware of a disturbance and allow it to pass. This should not be an excuse to create them.
3. Students should use the restroom before coming to class. If necessary, it is acceptable during class to use the restroom, as long as someone in the class is aware.
4. In taiji, we want to create a positive, calming atmosphere to help create chi. To nurture this, we should treat each other respectfully; with positive encouragement, compliments, and inclusive behavior.
5. Questions are encouraged. If a movement is causing discomfort, let the instructor know when working on the movement.
6. In some taiji partner drills, push hands, and applications, partners will be close to each other. Please respect your partner's comfort level in these drills, and keep your body clean and nails trimmed.
7. Let the instructors know before class if you have a personal injury or limitation that may affect your performance. If an instructor asks the class to perform a movement have difficulty with, do it only to the extent and range of motion you can do comfortably.
8. No student, regardless of rank, may instruct or correct another student without the direct and specific permission and supervision of the instructor.
9. Student attire should be kept clean and in good repair.
10. For everyone's safety no jewelry, with the exception of wedding rings, small religious symbols and medical tags should be worn during training.
11. Students who are ill should refrain from training in class until the illness is no longer contagious. In some Chinese medicine, it is believed that taiji practice during physical illness will drive an infection deeper. Mental conditions such as depression, however, are improved with consistent practice. Chronic physical issues such as heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, etc. should be evaluated by a doctor before beginning taiji practice.

## QiGong Form

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Fists by side – slide step toes out, heels out, toes out

3 punches out, grab and pull back

Palms together and side to side – 3x

Palms together and slide step toes out, heels out, toes out

Hands up and out, hands down and out – 3x

Finger tips facing each other in circle in front

Bring feet back toes in, heels in, toes in,

Twist to each side – 3x

Same hand and foot position, bring hands and stance up, bring hands and stance down – 3x

Palms together bring feet toes in, heels in, toes and feet together

Palms go up and up on toes

Return heels to floor, palms come to center, extend to the front, and chest opens palms up

Turn arms palm down, rise and lower arms, turn palms up, bring to front

Lean forward and hands go behind then out – 3x

Palms come to center, extend to the front, chest opens up, turn arms palm down, rise and lower arms, turn palms up, bring to front, and retract to your center

Palms go up and up on toes

Return heels to floor, End

## The Five Element Breaths

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1. **Wood** – Feet slightly apart – inhale – raise both open hands up over your head – exhale-bring hands down the center of your body, palms facing each other and bring back down to your sides.
2. **Earth**-Feet wide and knees bent –inhale-with open hands outstretched, scoop hands in front of body and circle outward up over the head-exhale as you bring hands back around and down.
3. **Fire**-same as earth only this time you will hold all of your fingertips together in a hollow fist
4. **Metal**-inhale-step out with left foot in a lunge, hands are open and at your sides, palms out. Exhale as you step, your hands will move forward in a clock wise circular motion back around to your hips. Do not raise hands higher than your shoulders. After one breath, pivot on your feet to face the other direction with your right foot forward and repeat the action with your hands.

5. **Water**-feet shoulder width apart and knees bent-inhale as your hands move up (backs of hands facing up) to eye level – exhale as you move the hands down in front of your body to the waist, palms facing out.

## Tai Chi Ranking System

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Our school uses the AMAI Tai Chi rank system for rank advancement. Traditionally, there is not rank system for Tai Chi, however we understand the benefits in setting and achieving small and large goals alike. Listed are the minimum requirements for advancement, though the instructor may ask other questions about taiji key points, qigong exercises, or other exercises practiced in class. Earning sashes is not intended to be a source of stress, but rather to see your level of understanding and progress in the nurturing of chi.

	White Sash – 4 months – Yang 24 Forms 1-8
	Orange Sash – 4 months – Yang 24 Forms 1-15 + 1 Application
	Yellow Sash – 6 months – Yang 24 Forms + 3 Applications
	Green Sash – 4 months – Chen 48 Forms 1-6
	Blue Sash – 4 months – Chen 48 Forms 1-12 + 1 Application
	Red Sash – 6 months – Chen 48 Forms 1-18 + 3 Applications
	Black Sash – 1 year – Chen 48 Forms 1-24 + 3 Applications
	Tiger Sash – 2 years – Chen 48 Forms 1-30 + Level 1 Instructor
	Deer Sash – 3 years – Chen 48 Forms 1-36 + Level 2 Instructor
	Bear Sash – 4 years – Chen 48 Forms + 5 Applications + Level 3 Instructor
	Monkey Sash – 5 years – Yang 24/Chen 48 + 5 Applications + Push Hands
	Crane Sash – 6 years – Yang 24/Chen 48 + 5 Yang & 5 Chen App. + Push Hands

During the advanced black sash levels, it is common for instruction to go beyond the standard curriculum. After achieving time at rank for Crane Sash, a Tai Chi practitioner can be submitted to the AMAI for the level of Tai Chi Master Instructor.

## Legacy AMA Tai Chi Instructor Levels

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### Level One

Wuji & Santi Poses  
10 Temple Exercises  
5 Element Breaths  
Qi Gong Form  
Red Sash  
Demonstrate Warm Up and Cool Down of a Class  
Yang 24 Form

### Level Two

Chen 1-18  
Silk Reeling Exercises 1-16  
Basic Sticking Hands Exercises  
10 Class Management Skills & People Skills Training  
Black Sash  
Assist Teaching in Class

### Level Three

Chen 1-30  
5 Animal Frolics  
Silk Reeling Exercises 1-30  
Written Test  
Tiger Sash  
Lead a Class