

“Grasp Sparrow Tail, Cross Hands and Close”

Posture Instruction List

“Grasp Sparrow Tail” (Lan Que Wei) is a sequence of postures that recurs 8 times total during the entire 154 posture, Wudangshan 108 Taijiquan Form, the most repeated sequence of any group of postures in this Form. It is comprised of 4 separate postures: Ward Off, Rollback, Press and Push (Peng, Lu, Ji, An), or 4 of the all-important 8 Gates above the waist, making this sequence even more important for students to understand. Cross Hands (Shi Zi Shou) is repeated 3 times, and Close (He Taiji) bring the Form to its final posture. In total this entire sequence of 39 repeated postures comprises one fourth of all the postures of Wudangshan 108 Taijiquan; a number that fits with most of the popular “short” Forms developed in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

The sequence of Grasp Sparrow Tail, Cross Hands and Close opens the Wudangshan 108 Form and when the beginning student finishes this first milestone, form learning is well under way! The following list of posture instructions are to be used in conjunction with class instructions. (After this point all further instructions in the 154 posture Form will be notated by the student.) The student will be introduced to the Grasp Sparrow Tail Sequence after the first initial training (2-3 months) with “First Three Postures,” “Simple Taiji Walking,” and “Four Flowers.” By that time, the student will be comfortable with our method, style of posture instructions, and have an understanding of the terms used in the following instruction list. The posture instruction list now begins with the following:

With the two opening postures completed, Yubei Shi and Qishi Taijiquan, the student is standing in wujibu stance (feet shoulder width body facing North), and Grasp Sparrow Tail begins with:

#1. WARD OFF LEFT (Peng Zuo 14 Counts Ends NE Ends Left Gongbu)

1. From 50-50%, shift weight 100% to left leg.
2. Turn, weighted pivot on left foot, ¼ turn to right. Swing arms clockwise to bring right hand, palm in, fingers pointing N about shoulder height. Left hand making simultaneous arc palm out fingers down, about waist high. Both hands touching an invisible opponent (IO) and their imagined elbow/shoulder and wrist/hip. (It is a good and recommended exercise to practice these 2 count movements on both sides, coming back to 50-50 between shifting left then right, back and forth.)
3. Step with empty right foot E and roll the right hand, palm down, to about chest height, as right heel touches ground. Weight still 100% on left leg.
4. Advance weight to right foot 50-50, push right hand down to about waist height.
5. Shift 60% weight to right foot (hu/tiger gongbu).

6. Pivoting left foot, turn left side to center, left hand pushes forward to chest of IO, as right hand begins to circle down to waist level palm rotating up.
7. Retreat to left foot (long/dragon gongbu), left hand circles back down to waist level palm up, right hand continues circle back to chest height palm down.
8. In long gongbu, holding hands, right on top, left on bottom as if holding a ball, rotate in right hip joint 45° and rt foot to SE corner.
9. Advance weight 80% to right foot, still holding "ball" with hands
10. Shift remaining 20% weight from left leg to right, stepping empty with left foot next to right.
11. Step 90° empty to left with left foot in long gongbu position, readying step to NE.
12. Advance to 50-50 substantial holding right hand in "ball" position while bringing left arm to chest height. (This is the position of Peng/Ward Off, the execution or application of Ward Off energy!)
13. Advance 10% to 60-40 stance position.
14. Pivot in left hip joint to left gongbu stance, facing NE, pivot left elbow bringing left hand, palm up, to deliver a back-hand strike to IO's head.

#2. WARD OFF RIGHT (Peng You 12 counts Ends E Right Gongbu)

1. Retreat to long gongbu bringing left arm to chest height (making contact w/IO's right arm).
2. When in long gongbu, rotate in right hip joint (bamboo) to deflect down and away.
3. Rotate back to center still facing NE, right hand rolls up to chest height, palm down, left hand underneath palm up, as if holding ball.
4. Advance to hu gongbu rolling hands to reach out with right hand push.
5. Retreat to long gongbu rolling hands to position left hand on top of ball palm down, right hand under palm up.
6. Rotate left hip and left foot 45°, face N.
7. Advance 80% to left leg carrying "ball."
8. Step up transferring remaining 20% weight from right leg, keeping 100% on left leg. Still face N.

9. Step right foot out 90° empty to east preparing for right gongbu.
10. Advance to 50-50% bringing up right arm to abdominal area. (This is application of Peng/Ward Off energy!)
11. Continue advance 10% to 60-40 stance (Hu Gongbu).
12. Pivot in right hip joint to right gongbu, facing E, pivot right elbow bringing right hand, palm up to deliver a back-hand strike to head.

#3. ROLL BACK (Lu 4 counts Ends below waist E, above NE Long Gongbu)

1. Staying in right gongbu, rotate waist (orchid).
2. Staying in right gongbu, rotate waist back to center as hands roll over, right to palm down, left to palm up, right hand reaching out slightly to contact IO's left elbow and left hand to wrist.
3. Retreat to 80% as both hands, slightly drop down.
4. Rotate in left hip joint (bamboo) about 45°, arms maintaining their positions. (This is Application of Roll Back energy!)

#4. PRESS (Ji 5 counts Ends E Right Following Stance/You Genbu/Feet Together)

1. Hands relax and left touches right wrist. Advance slowly to right leg 80%.
2. Employing 'Joint flow Release' transfer remaining 20% weight to right leg, drawing left foot up to right foot.
3. Rotate right hip to square body facing E. 100% on right leg, place left side-hand to inside right wrist.
4. Straighten right knee to raise left leg off ground, arms are raised to chest height.
5. Whole body drops, left foot is placed empty at a 45° angle, left hand issues energy against right wrist touching IO's body. (This is Application of Press energy!)

#5. PUSH (An 11 counts Ends E Right Gongbu)

1. Shift weight from full right foot to empty left, while opening the hands, palms in, to about shoulder width.

2. Rotating (right and then center) in the waist, turn the palms over the IO's forearms.
3. Drop the hands down to about waist level, sliding to feel IO's elbows.
4. Facing east step body width placing the right heel empty while simultaneously "locking" the IO's elbows by bringing heel of hands together.
5. Advance to 60-40 while opening hands to push with heel of hands. This is first of two double hand pushes.
6. Remaining in hu gongbu, rotate to right (orchid), turning both palms out to sides.
7. Rotate back to center while rolling the hands, wrists up, to contact the underside of IO's elbows.
8. Retreat to long gongbu while pushing up through the left leg to both wrists.
9. From long gongbu rotate to left (bamboo) so that palms turn to each other.
10. Rotate back to center, facing E.
11. Advance to 60-40 gongbu to deliver second push. (This is the Application of Push energy!)