

THE EIGHT-PIECE BROCADE

八 段 錦

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This series of eight movements and stretches was supposedly developed in the early 12th century by the famous Chinese military hero General Yu Fei in order to add sensitivity and suppleness to the strength of his soldiers. Since then it has become one of the most widely practiced qigong exercises in China.

Before starting take a couple of moments to clear and calm the mind. Stand straight and relaxed with a feeling of lightness at the top of the head. Breathe naturally from the diaphragm and focus the concentration on the center of gravity below the navel. Each piece should be repeated 3-9 times except for the last two which should be done twice as much as the others

1. “Support the Sky with Both Hands” – opens the lungs and stimulates metabolism
Stand straight and interlock the fingers in front of the waist. Raise hands above the head with palms facing up while tilting back the head and looking up at the sky. Unlock hands and move them laterally back down to sides.
2. “Draw the Bow and Shoot the Arrow” – loosens the waist and sharpens the focus
Widen the stance and bend the knees. Extend left arm straight out to the side and reach across with the right hand to the left elbow and “draw the bow.” Aim carefully, release the arrow and repeat on the other side.
3. “Separate Heaven and Earth” – regulates the qi dynamic and harmonizes the center
Stand straight and cross wrists in front of chest with both palms facing down. Lift the outer hand above the head with palm facing up and drop the inner hand to the side with palm facing down. Repeat on other side.
4. “Gaze Back like an Owl” – relieves the five taxations and seven damages
Stand straight. Turn neck and look over right shoulder while opening the chest, pulling the shoulders back and turning out the hands. Relax back to center and then look over the left shoulder while pulling shoulders forward and turning hands in. Switch sides halfway through.
5. “Sway the Head and Swing the Tail like a Monkey” – clears heart fire and circulates the blood
Widen the stance, bend the knees and place the hands on the thighs with thumbs on the outside. Turn the hips to the right, tilt forward and swoop around to the other side with the head swinging one way and the tail the other.
6. “Bend the Waist and Touch the Toes” – reinforces the kidneys and strengthens the bones
Stand straight and place the hands over the kidneys. Slide hands down the back of the legs while bending the waist. Continue out the sides of the feet and off the pinkie toes. Immediately bend the knees and straighten back up.
7. “Strike the Fists with Open Eyes” – stimulates the liver and invigorates the qi
Widen the stance, bend the knees and hold both fists at the side with palms up. Strike vigorously with strong intent into the center while twisting the fist palm down. Bring fist back slowly and strike out quickly with the other side.
8. “Rise on the Toes and Fall on the Heels” – unifies the whole body and dispels disease
Stand straight. Reach both hands straight out while rising up onto the toes. Balance while turning hands palm down and bending the elbows. As hands return to the sides with wrists bent fall quickly and firmly back onto the heels.