

THE EIGHT BASIC METHODS OF CHEN STYLE TAI CHI CHUAN

by

Master Cheng Jincal

Nearly all books on Tai Chi Chuan mention about the eight basic methods of practice: Peng (ward-off), Lu (rollback), Ji (push), An (press), Cai (grab), Lieh (Break), Zhou (elbow strike), and Khou (shoulder strike). However few has systematically discussed the theories and principles of these methods. I suggest that the eight basic methods and the five elements are the pillars and foundations of Tai Chi Chuan; similar to the strokes of calligraphy. Only by detailed analysis of the eight basic methods and the five elements will the students understand the concepts of this martial art. Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, famous Chinese philosophers from my clan, once said “ Learn enough to be able to practice, practice enough to understand, understanding results in improvement.” Once the concept of the eight basic methods is mastered, the skill will come with practice.

No matter whether it is Xiao Jia (small frame), Lao Jia (old frame) or Xin Jia (new frame); and no matter how the action varies, every moves of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan are derived from these eight basic methods. In order to learn the technique properly a thorough understanding of these methods is critical.

Peng (ward-off) is the first of the eight basic methods. It is a form of direct force. Peng is one of the frequently employed methods of Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan. 14th generation Grandmaster Chen Chang Xing once said: “Release, extricate, stretch, fold are hard to detect because I rely on spiraling. Twisting upwards and lifting from below, no other forms can compete.” This rhyme explained the function of Peng. People from Chen village used to say, “ Keep spiraling and never let go.” Others would say, “Keep Peng and don’t let go”. So Peng is the same as spiraling. The range of other basic methods can only be properly expressed with the force of Peng. Quoting from Confucian Scholar Meng “ If principles are not followed, success will not be achieved.” The power of Peng is the principle in Chen style Tai Chi Chuan.

Chen Fake, a 17th generation grandmaster once said “ There are three steps to learn Tai Chi Chuan: first to learn the correct moves, then to practice often, and finally understand the details”. I think a bit more explanation will help to understand the essence of Peng better. The power of Peng involves two

implications and has three different associations. The first implication is its relationship to breathing.

People ask exactly how intense should the breathing be with Peng? What is the definition of deep and shallow breathing? Chen Gan, a 16th generation grandmaster once remarked “ Breathing is indispensable with Tai Chi practice; without it there will have no energy in the movement.” I completely agree with this comment. In practicing Tai Chi, breathing (qi) is critical throughout. The flow of qi is also known as Peng breathing or Peng force. It must be sustained during the entire set. This flow is compared to the torrential current of the Yangtze River, as the energy is sustained.

To maintain the flow of Peng force throughout the form is a skill that can only be achieved with years of practice. The student has to pay special attention to appreciate this phenomenon. As to how deep the breathing and how large the force should be used during a practice to achieve the Peng force, I can suggest a simple criterion. Just as a person bends forward to lift an object from the floor, the power generated by this intentional and yet subconscious act is roughly equivalent to the force of the Peng. Once the person straightens up his body the force is not the same as Peng. So one can say the force either stronger or weaker than that of bending forward to lift is not Peng. If a student can sustain the right amount of force, his qi will not be lost. The alertness helps to detect the strength (listening energy) of his opponent.

In his book “ Chen style Tai Chi Chuan from the Chen Village” Zhu Tin Cai, a 19th generation grandmaster, described Peng as holding things with both hands. It is an upward movement; so it is the opposite of An, which is a downward press. It should be realized that Peng is not simply a force. The textbook of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan mentioned Peng should be present in every part of the body. Whether the opponent tries to grab, hold, punch, press, or push, the Peng force generated by breathing through Tan t'ien will neutralize his strength and begin an effective repulsion. Peng can also be used to close down the opponent. So it carries both defensive as well as offensive purposes and must be carefully studied.

It is easy to understand and comprehend the application of Peng force by the hands, but its generation in the body may be a bit difficult to comprehend. Peng is built on elasticity of the body. Upon repeated practice of Tai Chi Chuan, the flexibility of the muscles in our body allows themselves to merge with the bones and ligaments that can generate a formidable Peng force. My

article on “The Stretch in Tai Chi Chuan” discussed the importance of generating recoil. In order to generate Peng force, it only can be done by continually stretches and contracts the body to increase the elasticity of the body. Thus, the power of Peng. We should remember that Peng is the foundation of Tai Chi Chuan and is the prime force of this martial art. The other seven methods of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan all include some Peng force. They are forever linked with one another, and the Peng force should never be ignored.

The second implication of Peng is about its external disposition, the actual movement itself. So how exactly is the move of Peng should be like? In the practice of Tai Chi Chuan, any force that is directed forward or upward, irrespective the position of the body or arms is generating Peng force. It should be pointed out that during the practice of other basic methods of Tai Chi Chuan, including Cai (pull down), Lieh (rollback), Zhou (elbow strike), and Khou (shoulder strike), grab, na (qin na), throw, or drop, Peng force is involved. The presence of Peng helps to neutralize the opponent’s strength and facilitates a counterattack. It helps to build up confidence, promote calmness and concentration. Peng also enhances flexibility so that its power can be instilled into any other moves, making them more effective.

We will now address the relationship of Peng with other basic components of Tai Chi, namely the dong (the inner side of both thigh, knee, and lower leg), the point of force exertion, and combat application. A strong dong is vital in the development of the Peng move. This can be seen in the first move of the first act of Lao Jia. When both arms are raised it is the posture to generate Peng. At this point if the dong is not bent and the pelvis (qua) is not lowered properly, equilibrium is not established and the stability force cannot be maintained.

Another example is found during the transition into the start of Buddha Stump. Here both arms are raised and the right leg steps forward in a Peng move. If at this point the right dong is not bent, the kick by the left leg will not generate any force and therefore lacks power. For fairy pointing the way in Tai Chi Sword the right leg plants on the ground and the left leg is raised in a Peng posture. The left dong should be bent otherwise the power of the move cannot be generated. Therefore Peng is involved in many moves of Tai Chi Chuan and weapon sets.

Whenever a Peng move is made, the dong must be bent and the qua must be lowered, otherwise the body will be rigid like a rod. The sequence of Tai Chi moves will be disjointed and their flow discontinuous. As a result the power of Peng is not developed properly and the opponent gains the upper hand. When the dong is bent and qua is sunken, the body is stable like an arc of the bridge and is able to withstand large amount of external force. A stable lower body helps the delivery of Peng force. The proper technique to execute the dong and qua movement is critical.

If the dong is bent too low, the chest will overextend and the lower body cannot build up Peng strength correctly. The energy generated is collapsed and the ability to withstand external pressure is markedly reduced. Alternatively, if the dong is exaggerated upwards the central stability is not secured and the coordination with the rest of the body is lacking. It will be hard to produce the desired effect of the Peng force. So the student of Tai Chi Chuan must pay special attention to the association between Peng, dong, and qua.

The relationship between Peng and the focal point of force is important. If this is not clearly understood, one is prone to the commit the mistake of drooping and rigidity. When the body is not relaxed it is hard to learn the moves well. One of my students showed an impressive posture during practice. However when I touched his upper arm with my fingers, his body felt stiff like a rod. This student had learned other kinds of kung fu previously and he did not understand the essence of building Peng force from the right focal point of force. He took quite some time before this bad habit was corrected. It is vital to realize that there is only a single focal point in the moves of Tai Chi Chuan.

If it is centered in the finger, then the force from other parts of the body cannot be stronger than that of the finger. Instead these parts should relax and the leading force is to come from the finger. The same principle also applies to the wrist, elbow, or any other part of the body that is used as the focal point of force. Furthermore there can be one and only one focal point on either side of the midline. If there is more than one point the body will be stiff, the power generated will be diffused and the energy will be loose. Therefore a general principle in Tai Chi Chuan is to ensure the harmony between Peng and the focal point of force. When this rule is mastered and perfected, all the moves will be accurate and precise. The student will be able to achieve the desired effect and mobility during actual combat.

How best to bring out the Peng force during combat? In general its primary function is to neutralize and redirect the power of an opponent. Additionally Peng integrates with the other classifications of force such as Cai, Lieh, Zhou, Khou, Lu, Ji, An, Zon (relax), Woe (lively), Tian (elasticity), shake, grab, Na, throw, and drop. In other word, Peng will be used with other basic methods of Tai Chi. For example, Peng can be used together with Cai, with Lieh, and with Zhou and Khou. In these situations Peng has a vital significance. If Peng is not executed properly, it is impossible to bring out the potency of the other basic methods.

So there is a saying in Tai Chi that Peng is like bone while the other methods are like flesh. Without Peng, there is no structure in the form. Also, Peng is like water while other basic methods are like fishes. Without water the fishes cannot survive. Peng is the foundation of Tai Chi. One can determine the practitioner's skill by observing his performance of the Peng form. In a picture illustration in my first book a row of people joined forces to push me off balance. They failed. This was a demonstration of the power of Peng. By collapsing the chest, loosening the waist, lowering the qua, and bending the dong, my feet were secured like a tree. My body could withstand a tremendous amount of external force. It showed the exceptional strength of Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan.

Lu (rollback) is another basic method of Tai Chi. It is also one of the four direct forces. Lu is frequently used in the Chen Style combat. The power point of Lu is on both wrists. When applied together with rotation of the waist Lu redirects the momentum of the opponent, leading him astride. The saying of "four teals of force can move thousand pounds" about Tai Chi actually is a reference to Lu. During the move the body has to be coordinated: the energy point has to be precise, the shoulders and elbows are lowered, and the qi flows down the spine. The neck and the tailbone form a vertical line and the posture of the body is kept straight. The spine becomes the central axis and the waist rotating around it like a wheel. When the waist and spine turn together smoothly, the force of the opponent is diverted to either side of the body. The more the hands and the waist coordinate, the stronger the power of the Lu. At the point of contact the move should be light, precise, quick, and continuous. With the rotation of the waist the forward momentum of the opponent is unchanged, nonstop, and unbroken. His speed is suddenly exaggerated, and a lack of compensation invariably results in a loss of balance.

Lu can be performed with one or both hands. The one-handed move is used during the transition from Twist Step (Ao Bu) to Hidden Hand Punch. In this sequence, the right hand diverts the charging opponent by an upward and backward action. Simultaneously the right foot steps forward and a punch is delivered at a close range. The two-handed Lu is seen in a number of sequences, such as the Oblique Form, and Green Dragon rising out of Water converting into Both Hand Push. The force of Lu cannot be dissociated from that of Peng (ward-off). Otherwise its energy will crumble. As that happens, the rotational force of the waist cannot be fully expressed and the Lu generates much less power, leading to a substandard effect. This point deserves special attention.

Ji (push) is also one of the eighth basic methods. It belongs to the direct forces and is frequently applied in the Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan. When used in a close range Ji can cause an opponent to lose balance. It is also an extension of Peng, aiming to compromise the attacker. Ji can be delivered in a number of ways: using one-hand, both-hands, the elbow, the shoulder, the chest, the back, the hip, or the thigh. The move can be adjusted at anytime. It can assault the opponent if he is holding back. When he moves forward, Ji can displace his momentum to miss the target. Ji is a technique used in close range, so the body must be stable. This provides flexible mobility and maximal adaptability during combat.

When employing Ji in close range, the practitioner must have acquired a solid foundation in Tai Chi otherwise it cannot be fully deployed. Therefore how well is Ji force delivered is a reflection on the student's skill level. Grandmaster Chen Gan once said, "When perfected, Tai Chi Chuan cannot be tracked or predicted. It is like the movement of a magical dragon: natural, flexible, and yet unpredictable." Frequent practice results in "a sharp reflex to tactile sensation of the surrounding, opening the door to the wonder of Tai Chi." (Quoted in Wang Xian's "Chen Style Tai Chi Push Hand Manual page 3.")

An (press) is one of the eight basic methods and is another of the direct forces. It is a common technique in Tai Chi Chuan. An means to close and to shut down. Its focal point of force is transmitted from the center or the root of the palm, while the center revolves around the waist. The energy (qi) is accumulated in the tan t'ien. An can be delivered with one or both hands. The proper posture of An dictates that the shoulders be sunken and elbows submerged. With folding the chest and loosening the waist, the body is kept

erect while the qi descends to the tan t'ien. The turning of the waist brings the whole torso into motion, coordinating the upper and lower body into a single compact system. Grandmaster Chen Gan said, "Both hands have to sink downwards, otherwise the shoulders would be elevated, rendering the form useless." Therefore it is critical to make sure the shoulders and elbows are sunken in order to express the power of An.

In the book "*The complete verse of Tai Chi Chuan*" Pioneer Chen Wang-ting said, "Practice Peng, Lu, Ji, and An seriously. When fluent it is very difficult to challenge. Even if the opponent charges with tremendous power, I can apply four teals of force to redirect and neutralize a thousand pounds." To illustrate this principle let's imagine the opponent attacks with a straight fist punch or a two-hand push. The first move is to lead his force astray. This alters the direction of the charge, deflecting the opponent's forward momentum sideways and towards the floor. Then apply An force to his forearm, arm, or chest to prevent him from adjusting. Remember to shift the weight on the leading leg, together with shoulders and elbows sunken, hold the qi in the tan t'ien, and concentrate the strength around the qua. This move often causes him to fumble forward or backward. When An energy is exerted from the middle or the root of the palms, the flow of energy is continuous, and an optimal effect is produced.

Whether delivered with one or both hands, An is very practical during push hand drill and self-defense. Through frequent practice the power of An can be effectively expressed. Remember the upper and lower body moves in synchronization, the whole torso follow in unison, and this basic method is executed with ease.

Cai (grab) is another of the eight basic methods. It is one of four indirect forces. In Chen Style Tai Chi Chuan, Cai is basically meant grab and hold (qin na). There are many ways to deliver Cai, including single Cai, double Cai, elbow Cai, and chest Cai. Almost any part of the body can be integrated into a Cai move. To understand and execute Cai in Tai Chi, the practitioner must first acquire the skills of detecting, neutralizing, and applying force. These skills are essential to perform this basic method of Chen Style Tai Chi. In Cai the movement of the body and the footsteps merge beautifully, creating agility and variations. Whether it is grab or counter grab, hold or reverse-hold, this basic method is very practical. When Cai is used, concrete and fathom forces are often alternated and intermingled, making it hard for the opponent to

anticipate. The essence of Cai is to maintain a sharp eye and a quick hand, targeting the muscles and the joints of the opponent. The goal is to strike the bones and grab the ligaments, rendering him defenseless. These are the basics of grab and the essences of hold (Cai).

The Cai in Chen's Style Tai Chi is different from the grab and hold in other styles of martial art. Elsewhere the first reaction to an oncoming strike is to block and parry, interrupting the force of the opponent. Capturing and twisting the joint of the attacker follow this. In the Chen's Style basic method of Cai, the initial move is to follow the flow of the approaching force of the opponent without interruption and diverting it sideways into emptiness. This redirection exposes the opponent's arm and his meridian point to capture and clobber.

The flow of action should be smooth and subtle, so that the attacker cannot visualize my tactic and fail to adjust and change. By the time he realizes his predicament, his hand is already under constraint. Generally speaking augmenting the opponent's thrust along the direction of his momentum, followed by capturing his outstretched limb is more effective. On the other hand countering the charge with brute force before trying to lock up his arm seldom produces success. This is because the attacker will have time to react. When his action is interrupted man's reflex is to modify his move. Once that happened, it will be difficult to grab his arm effectively. So the essence of Cai in Chen's Style Tai Chi is not to interrupt the flow of the opponent's momentum, but rather prevent him from adjusting to any changes. This approach allows the practitioner to apply different forms of Cai according to the situation.

This three-dimensional process to apply Cai represents a higher degree of skill and execution. In the winter of 1979, I practiced Tai Chi under the tutelage of 18th generation Grandmaster Chen Zhukui in the city of Jiao Zuo. He emphasized the need to repetitively practice each Cai move, ensuring his students a complete understanding of the underlying principles. The strength levels and the applications of the different Cai moves, and their coordination with the body motions were perfected. He also explained the significance of redirecting and counterattack. This alternate guidance on the principles and practice gave me a solid foundation of Cai, which is critical to my teaching today.

To fully master the basic method of Cai, it is important to understand the anatomy and kinesiology of the human body. Knowledge in these areas allows the integration of Cai into the rhythm of our body. Recognizing the vulnerable spots of the human body helps to apply the principles and practice of Tai Chi techniques intelligently.

Knowing the principles of the body structure, exercise mechanics and physiology help us to command the proper sequence of force delivery and power adjustment. Additional practice in basic stretching, as well as rotational movement of the waist and the stance, facilitates the perfection of Cai. With proper training, the range of motion of the joints and ligaments increase and the whole body becomes more coordinated. The rotation of the waist extends the range of action and counteraction of the grab, so that our dimensions of excursion are longer than that of our opponent.

This phenomenon provides us with technical and functional superiority to inflict damage to the adversary. Grandmaster Chen Zhukui always emphasized the important role of the waist and hip in Cai. They are the focal and pivotal points of the grab and hold, and their proper execution should not be regarded lightly. It should be remembered that body movement is a combination of activity of its musculoskeletal system and the change of body positions. This chain reaction complements each other producing complicated moves. In order to fully appreciate the Cai in Chen Style Tai Chi (qin na), it is necessary to fully understand the rest of Chen Style Tai Chi and the structure of the human body. Frequent practice will establish and perfect the relationship between this component (Cai) and the rest of Tai Chi Chu'an activities.

Lieh (Break) is one of the eight basic methods. It belongs to the indirect forces. The main emphasis is on the waist and qua, combined with the hand, the elbow, and the arms in a coordinated movement to strike at the joints and ligaments. It carries with explosive power.

Lieh can be applied by single, double, outward, inward, upward or downward action. For example a single Lieh can be used when the opponent grabs my collar. Using the principle of leverage I spiral downward my body and roll my arm upward, attacking his elbow joint. The single Lieh can be delivered in a flash and causes significant damage. It should be applied with precision and caution. The double Lieh and the downward Lieh are easier to learn, but the amount of force exerted requires special attention. The execution of the

outward lieh, inward lieh, and upward Lieh requires a sharper turn of the body. These moves are prone to cause injury to the elbow and arm of the opponent.

A common application of Lieh is as follows: when the attacker tries to punch or push me from the front, or tries to grab my forearm, the first move is to neutralize his momentum. Spiral the body and redirect his force into emptiness. Use the hand to grab the wrist of the opponent and turn it in the reversed direction. Next roll the forearm into the space under his armpit and twist his upper limb. Lowering my stance and crashing the elbow of the attacker follow this. No matter what kind of Lieh is used at that point it will uproot the attacker and topple him over to the side. If the force is exerted too much, the elbow of the opponent may be dislocated. The move must be used judiciously and should be avoided in the classroom.

Zhou (Elbow Strike) is one of the eight basic methods of Tai Chi. It belongs to the indirect forces and is another frequent-employed offensive technique. The bent elbow joint is used to strike the opponent in different ways at close range. Zhou is explosive and menacing, it can be very damaging or even lethal. Strict attention is necessary in applying this basic method.

Zhou can be executed in a number of ways: single Zhou, doubling Zhou, flow Zhou, Zhou across the waist, Zhou to the heart, upswing Zhou, back-breaking Zhou, back-to-back Zhou. Single Zhou is used most often. For example in Shield Heart with Elbow, the move involves single Zhou. In 38 Section Routine switching from Oblique Form to Buddha Stump the strike is an across the waist Zhou. During the transition from Ground Hitting Punch to Double Kick involves the backbreaking Zhou. The last few moves in Cannon Fist consist of several Zhou moves: across the waist Zhou, flow Zhou, Zhou to the heart, and back-to-back Zhou. The move after “Go Straight with Left Palm into the Well” is a double front Zhou. In Xin Jia a step-back downward pressing Zhou follows Reverse Rolling of the Curtain.

Zhou is often applied in Chen Style Tai Chi. Regardless of which way this basic method is contemplated, it is critical to advance the body when delivering the Zhou strike. The footwork has to be exact when closing in on the opponent. This allows the explosive power of Zhou to come through. To perform this basic method well the coordination of waist, hip, elbow and footwork is critical. A dictum in Tai Chi says “the strike is ineffective unless the arm and the body reach the opponent at the same time.” Grandmaster Wang

Xian often reminds his students, “Guard your territory and don’t lose the range.”

A common slogan also says, “Strike with the fist afar, use the elbow when in close range.” Grandmaster Chen Gan insisted on Zhou striking has to coordinate with power delivery, no matter it is to the front, the back, left side, right side, above, or below.” For example, if someone clasps around my waist, I will turn my body to the left while sinking my stance. The right hand spirals down to reduce the confinement. This way the opponent will slant towards my right side. I will bend and twist my elbow and strike backwards. The thrust will hit the attacker’s chest near the heart. This devastating move should only be used in combat and must not be tried during the class.

Zhou may be used during a broad-range or close-range of action. It is easier to control during a broad-range practice. Injury is unlikely. Zhou striking in close-range can be crippling or even lethal. It should not be used except in combat action.

Khou (Shoulder strike) is one of the eight basic methods of Tai Chi. It belongs to the indirect forces. Khou is also an explosive strike delivered at close range. The method uses parts of the body between the shoulder and the knee to attack. For example: shoulder strike (inside or outside shoulder), and chest strike. If the attacker tries to encroach from the front, I will use Peng to neutralize his action, followed by chest strike to hit his upper body. If the attack tries to wrap around me from behind, I will quickly fold my chest and loosen my waist. This will be followed with a back strike to the chest of the attacker. There are also Khou striking with the hip and the buttock. The Complete verse of Chen style Tai Chi Chuan mentioned Khou as “Striking the head and hitting the face is common in all forms of martial art, piercing the heart and breaking the rib cage in Chen Tai Chi is applauded by all.”

Khou striking is a unique and special offensive technique in Chen Style Tai Chi. The 12th generation Grandmaster Chen Kin Pak perfected this basic method that bore his name. Body striking is very practical, explosive, and can cause serious injury. It should be applied judiciously and only in combat.

THE TECHNIQUES OF THE EIGHT BASIC METHODS

Four of the eight basic methods Peng, Lu, Ji, and An are direct forces. Cai, Lieh, Zhou and Khou belong to the category of indirect forces.

Beginners should first learn the four direct forces before turning to the four indirect forces. Peng, Lu, Ji, and An train the body stance, balance and stability. Cai, Lieh, Zhou and Khou emphasize on redirecting, buildup and delivering power. During training the body should be relaxed and agile, resting squarely on the stance. Whether it is moving forward, sliding back, turning, rising and sinking, the vertex, the trunk and the clutch should stay in an imaginary straight line. Even when the body has to be bent, the center of gravity cannot be swayed from the midline. This ensures the qi be sustained throughout the body. Any degree of leaning, reclining, tilting, imbalance, or loss of equilibrium are unacceptable in Tai Chi Chuan and must be rectified. During practice the shoulders and hips, elbows and knees, and hands and feet must be aligned. Both upper and lower limbs should be balanced. This allows shifting and pivoting to synchronize harmoniously.

The practice of Peng, Lu, Ji, and An train the leg movement and the development of subtle force. The steps of these basic methods resemble the footwork of a cat, and the rhythm flows like unwoven silk. The soles are planted firmly on the ground without swaying. Whenever there is a switch in the basic method the move should be in a circular arc, with arms spiraling upwards or downwards. It is a mistake to advance or retreat in a straight line. The actions of the upper and lower limbs should coordinate to ensure the proper sequence. Maintaining the hand follow the footwork and the foot follow the hand motion.

When advancing, the root of the hip joint should close slightly inward. This makes the belly of that side more taut and the center of the body gravitates firmly on one leg. The toes should grab the floor firmly, thus stabilizing the trunk. The other leg can then be raised slowly.

When moving forward or sideways the heel should land first. If the movement is backward, then the tips of the toes should be the first to hit the ground. Throughout the motion the knees are slightly bent. The shoulders are turned slightly inward and the back is hunched outward. This allows the energy of the whole body compactly stored. The footsteps alternate between quick and slow in rhythm, coordinating with the pace of the applications.

For backward moves, energy is concentrated in the knee of the trailing leg. The calf leads the ankle, while the foot points vertically downward. The leg stretches slowly backward in a spiral, touching the ground first with the toes or the sole, before ending with a firm stance.

Cai, Lieh, Zhou, Khou are the four indirect forces. They train for power generation and delivery. Each basic method has three components. They are force neutralization, energy built-up and unleashing the power. When applying each method the moves should be fluent, consecutive, and uninterrupted. The movement of the feet should be nimble, brisk, and harmonious, leading to a surprised attack.

Moves to neutralize the momentum of the opponent should be precise and light. The goal is not to directly block the attacking force. Instead one may use hook, grab, lock, and twist motions. Sinking the hip and loosening the waist should assist these moves. (The above principles can be recalled by reviewing previous paragraphs). Frequent practices will help to perfect the skill. Energy built-up involves an extensive range of movement. The hip is rotated, the back turned, the stance is lowered and the chest fully inflated. The power that is unleashed depends on the degree of energy built-up. It will be more explosive if the built-up is strong. During its release the thrust should be accurate and crippling. Breathing from the Tan t'ien helps to deliver the power at peak strength to the end of the hitting point.

When performing the eight basic methods, the force is directed from the middle finger of the palm. The five fingers are closed to each other and relaxed. The hand leads the elbow, and the shoulder follows. The shoulder also rotates with the waist. This spiral action, whether it is directed forwards, backwards, upwards, or downwards, must be crisp and well defined. At the end of the move the shoulders and elbows are relaxed and sunken. There is a feeling of fullness in the fingers. In Tai Chi the navel and the nose form a centerline. The left and right hand control its corresponding half of the body. When the left hand is traveling to the right, or vice versa, the hand should point toward the tip of the nose when traveling up, and toward the tip of the foot while coming down. This way the whole move will not deviate from the midline and the body remains balanced and comfortable.

During practice the eyes follow horizontally the excursion of the moving hand. Tai Chi Chuan emphasizes the coordination of the eyes, the hands, the body, and the footwork. The eyes are the windows of our mind. A sharp vision

provides enormous advantage. 18th generation Grandmaster Chen Zhukui emphasized special attention to the eye movement when teaching trick fighting. It gives the impression that the punch may come in the same direction as that of the eye movement, but it may also emerge from the opposite side. This causes confusion to the opponent. The practitioner will then be able move swiftly ahead to deliver the knockout strike. Repeated rehearsal of the eight basic methods is very helpful in the training of the 38 Section Routine, Lao Jia, and the rest of Chen Style Tai Chi.

All movements of the Eight Basic Methods can be practiced in both left and right side. Practice the movements to the left side and then to the right side.