

Stretches and Warm-ups

Meditation – stand with feet a little wider than shoulder-width. Breathing in, raise the palms; exhaling, turn the palms over and lower the hands. Next add Two Gates Breathing: visualize energy and heaviness sinking into the Earth through the soles of your feet as the palms rise. As the hands sink, imagine the body becoming lighter.

Meditation on one leg – step straight ahead and shift weight onto the forward foot. Touch the toe of the weightless foot at 45° and face that direction. Breathing in, sink the body as the palms rise. Breathing out, the hands sink as the body rises.

Pick up the Earth and Push to Sky – feet under shoulders or wider. Hands rise to overhead as one sits. Palms up, pushing into the sky. As one stands, the hands sink.

Riding the Horse (Ma Bu) – simply resting still while sitting on an imaginary horse. It is recommended to rest in the position for about 3 minutes. The hands could rest naturally on the thighs, or Hold the Pillar or Rest on the Jade Table. There are many variations.

Rotate the Torso – sit then bend at the waist so the torso goes forward. Then back slightly. Then circle a few times one direction, then reverse.

Pick-up the Tiger – feet under shoulders or wider, lift hands toward heaven, stretching up. While sitting, let the hands lower, synchronized with the legs. Variation: alternate the weight being all on one leg and then the other. Draping the Tiger.

Turn the Heavenly Pillar – standing, turn the waist to move the torso and arms. The hands loosely slap the body.

The Phoenix Eats Its Ashes – stand with feet parallel. Turn one side 90° out. Shift weight out. Shift back and raise the hands over the head; raise the toes with the heel resting on the ground. Lean back slightly, carefully. Stretch hands upwards, then out to the horizon and then touch the chin to the toe, gently. Rise and repeat. Turn to practice with the other foot.

Opening the Shoulders – sit on the horse. Scrunch the shoulders together then throw the arms open and back. Repeat.

Looking Back – from the eagle stance, cross hands. Stretch to the diagonal. Return to cross hands, then turn and stretch to the back wall and front wall, looking at the back of your hand. Repeat on other side.

Loosening – shake the arms; shake the legs; roll the shoulders; circle with the waist; warm the knees; circle with the knees; loosen the ankles.

Alternating Punching – ride the horse. Alternately, imagine each hand filling with a warm fluid as it punches slowly. Variation: turn the waist to the side opposite the punching hand.

Turning – remove all weight from forward foot. Turn 90°. Shift weight onto it and stand on one leg. Step with the other to complete turn.

Dragon Dance – begin with push. Turn with Dragon Stretches Claws. Spiral hands up and push.

Release Energy – standing, raise up the heels. Raise the balls of the feet. Repeat.

Never use force. Always loose and relaxed. Move organically, not mechanically.