

# About Tai Chi Ruler Exercises

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## Overview

One of the more obscure forms of martial arts training, tai chi ruler, uses a specially designed baton, about 1 foot in length, that practitioners hold between their hands to help focus their movements. A typical tai chi ruler form or set contains eight drills or exercises that train students in moving the baton in different ways. To learn tai chi ruler, seek out an instructor who is experienced in this form.

## The Instrument

The tai chi ruler is a wooden dowel, strategically shaped with two curved ends so that practitioners, who place their palms on either end of the ruler, can hold it comfortably, Michael Dasargo, master martial arts instructor with Immortal Fitness Martial Arts in San Diego, notes on his organization's website. An alternative name of this instrument was the "settle heart needle," or "Ding Xin Chi." Dasargo notes that practitioners changed the name to tai chi ruler after tai chi became more popular as a form of moving meditation, but the Ding Xin Chi form was originally its own separate art.

## Tai Chi Ruler Movements

Once a practitioner takes hold of the ruler by pressing his palms against the opposing ends, he performs a set of movements that include figure eights, circular motions in front of the body, and martial arts-like upper cuts. The presence of the ruler challenges the flexibility of the shoulder and wrist joints because your hands can never be more than a foot apart, notes Lama Somananda Tantrapa, Buddhist monk and founder of the Academy of Qi Dao in Portland, Oregon, author of "Qi Dao --- Tibetan Shamanic Qigong." Performing tai chi ruler movements regularly can help you to discipline yourself to move the hands as a single unit, rather than individually.

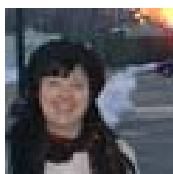
## Purpose

Practitioners who train in tai chi ruler claim that working with the wooden dowel helps to train the hands to become more sensitive to qi, or vital life energy. Lama Tantrapa recommends tai chi ruler training to help you feel that a ball of energy is building between your hands as you move. Glenn D. Newth, tai chi master and author of "Hwa Yu T'ai Chi Ch'uan," argues that the ruler activates the flow of qi. According to Newth, the instrument absorbs qi when you work with it. When you pick it up during a future workout session, the ruler releases its stored qi, helping you to get into training mode more easily.

## Application

Like many internal martial art practices, the ultimate use of tai chi ruler exercises is the development of what tai chi master Paul Dong calls "empty force." This ability -- which involves using soft, relaxed and small movements to exert enormous force against an opponent -- is a product of slow training, like the kind tai chi ruler practitioners use. Richard M. Mooney, kung fu and tai chi ruler instructor in Texas, writing in Dong's book "Empty Force: The Power of Chi for Self-Defense and Energy Healing," notes that he practiced tai chi ruler for three or four years before he was able to use empty force effectively.

## About this Author



Melissa Smith has been writing professionally since 1990. She began training in tai chi and chi kung meditation in 1995. She is an accredited Reiki practitioner and tai chi instructor and specializes in teaching seniors and people with disabilities. Her writing appears in "Literature and Medicine" and the "Encyclopedia of Pestilence, Pandemics and Plagues." She holds a doctorate in English literature from McMaster University.