FAQS about Learning Tai Chi (Taijiquan)

How do I learn Tai Chi or Taijiquan?
Learning Tai Chi (Taijiquan) is best learned from a qualified instructor who has been trained to teach you how to learn this gentle, easy-to-learn exercise regime that will strengthen you from the inside out. You can learn an entire (beginner) form (or set of movements) in about 12 weeks.

First your instructor will teach you the basic stances and tai chi walking. Your instructor will repeat each movement several times so that you can follow along more easily. Learning is by doing and repeating until your body and mind just know what are the right movements.

You do not have to be in good physical condition to start learning. This is a great form of exercise that works well for those who are recovering from an accident, illness, balance issues, or working to lose weight.

How long does it take to learn a Yang Style Form of Taijiquan?
To learn the basic stances, postures, and “choreography” of a form, normally takes only 12 weeks. It helps to learn it better with a bit of private practice at home. Additionally, we encourage all students to regularly practice the warm-up on their own. The more you move, stretch and strengthen using Taijiquan movements, the easier it will be for you and your muscles to remember it all. No matter what age, you can learn Taijiquan.

What is Yang Style Taijiquan?
There are five main types of tai chi. Yang, Sun, Chen, Wu, Wu Hao. Yang style is one of the world’s most popular style practiced today.

What if I can’t remember the movements I’ve learned in class? How do I practice at home on my own?
I have a bad memory. Will I be able to learn to do Taijiquan on my own?
With some dedication, along with the visual aids that will be suggested to you, almost everyone can learn Taijiquan with a bit of effort, even those who have suffered from a stroke, brain injury, or other advanced chronic condition. If you can’t remember the exact movement you learned in your most recent class, there are many things you can do regardless of whether or not you’ve forgotten. Spending 5 minutes, 20 minutes, or an hour at home on your own is important. It is the intention to try, making an effort, which is what counts in helping you to experience the deeper benefits of tai chi resulting in a happier well-being.

What do I wear to a class?
Just wear some comfortable clothing and either walking or running shoes. The shoes shouldn’t be too heavy. To know whether or not you are wearing the right shoes, try standing on one leg. If you feel your shoes are helping to support you do this, especially in the heel, then you are wearing the right shoes. There is no special uniform. Sweat pants, yoga pants, or shorts (depending on the weather) work great.
What are the health benefits?
Regular practice of Yang Style Taijiquan has the same general benefits as other styles of Taijiquan, such as Chen, Sun, Wu, or Taoist (Daoist) Taijiquan. Yang Style Taijiquan can bring huge improvement to the muscular, skeletal, and circulatory systems by increasing the qi flow, strengthening from the inside out, and improving your balance, body and mind. While Yang style Taijiquan is also a martial art, beginners always learn how to do Taijiquan from a health-benefit point of view.

What if I have a current health issue, mobility problem, handicap or ailment?
Taijiquan can be easily adapted to those with almost any issue. In fact, if you have a current health issue, research shows that the practice of tai chi will improve with regular practice. Just google “Taijiquan Health Benefits” and you’ll get tens of thousands of results. All we ask is that you tell our Instructor when you sign up so they can help provide you with the most appropriate adaptation. Taijiquan can even be adapted to those restricted to a wheelchair or for those who need to sit down for extended periods of time. Do you have knee problems? Taijiquan is good for knees… just ask your Instructor.

Who is my Instructor and what are the costs?
Your instructors are motivated, dedicated Taijiquan practitioners who have been given permission to teach by their Master. In the case of the North Shore Tai Chi Spirit, one of the instructors was given permission to teach by her Master Instructor in 2006 and by her Grand Master in 2008. The other Master Instructor has over 28 years experience teaching tai chi and qigong.

When deciding where to take your tai chi classes take the time to consider the Instructor’s background in martial arts, other athletic successes, and their teaching experience. Classes are usually held in 12 week sessions and our class prices range from $4.50-$9.50 per class (for registered students) depending on whether you attend at Highlands United Church, North Shore Neighbourhood House or the John Braithwaite Community Centre. If you register for a class the cost will be cheaper than the drop-in fee which is usually around $8.00-$12.00, depending on the class and its location.

How do I sign up? What if I am not sure what class I should take?
If you are not sure what class you should take, especially if you are a beginner, call the North Shore Tai Chi Spirit at 604-986-9276 or email taichispirit@shaw.ca and the Instructor will advise you which is your best option. Depending on whether you are working, semi or fully retired, there are many classes, dates and times to choose from.

1) If you want to attend classes at Highlands United Church on Wednesday (early) Evenings or Saturday mornings, register by calling 604-986-9276 or email taichispirit@shaw.ca
2) If you want to attend classes at North Shore Neighbourhood House, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, register by calling 604-987-9138 or email taichispirit@shaw.ca
3) If you want to attend classes at John Braithwaite Community Centre, on Wednesday mornings or Friday mornings, register by calling 604-982-8300 or email taichispirit@shaw.ca
4) Or… just drop in to any of the Meetups we have listed at: http://www.meetup.com/northshoretaichi/

Will learning from a video or book help me?
Learning from a video or book will help you understand more. Learning from a trained Instructor on a weekly basis along with a video or a book goes hand-in-hand extremely well. You can be assured that your Instructor has the correct form for you to follow.

Is this a Health Recovery Program?
When you have been ill or injured it is important that your Instructor understand your experience. The very act of practicing any form of Taijiquan, whether it be Yang Style, Chen, Sun, Wu, or Daoist/Taoist style, with a trained specialist in the area, is the key. Our instructors at the North Shore Tai Chi Spirit & Tai Chi Players are not volunteers but persons who are dedicated to teaching Taijiquan and who have travelled their own healing journey. They are experienced Instructors. The practice of Taijiquan will be taught in a safe manner, giving you confidence, at any age, that you can improve your quality of life. Our instructors work well in conjunction with the advice you’ve been given from other health practitioners.
What are the Health Benefits of practicing Taijiquan?
If you google “Taijiquan and Health Benefits” you will get tens of thousands of links to review. Here is a simple summary of all that you can achieve with regular practice of Taijiquan:

- The practice of Tai Chi will have a positive effect on lung function because it is, in itself, a moderate cardiovascular training exercise because of its emphasis on deep breathing and relaxation.
- Tai Chi can be performed from a standing position, sitting, or while in bed. As a result, with regular practice you will improve your posture and your daily activities will feel easier, more relaxed, and with less pain.
- Research has shown that for those living with multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, Parkinson's disease, head injury, brain injury, stroke, Taijiquan will improve in a number of areas of your body. Check out some of the research articles listed on the website. [http://www.meetup.com/northshoretaijiquan/files/](http://www.meetup.com/northshoretaijiquan/files/)
- Tai Chi helps regulate and improve the immune system.
- By learning Tai Chi you will learn better postural alignment which will help reduce spinal degeneration or the pain of herniations.
- Those with osteoporosis will be helped by the regular practice of Taijiquan.
- Anyone over the age of 50 will benefit from learning how to prevent falls by improves posture, strength and flexibility.

If you have any questions don’t hesitate to email the taichispirit@shaw.ca.