

EMPTY HAND ROUTINES

THE EIGHT POSTURES ROUTINE

八勢

INTRODUCTION TO THE EIGHT POSTURES ROUTINE

The eight postures routine is another short traditional routine, usually learned after the five elements connected routine. Like the five elements routine, there are 17 movements in one direction, and then the movements repeat on the way back. It contains the five elements, sparrow-hawk, chicken and horse from the twelve animals, and some additional moves such as *dragon and tiger play together*, *white crane flashes its wings*, and *wheel around and pound*.

Why is it called the eight postures? You could say because it adds three animals to the five elements. But if you look at it from a structural point of view, in terms of power flow, there are eight key combinations. The first is *sparrow hawk folds its wings* and *sparrow hawk enters the woods*; the second is the *single horse*; the third is the *retreating crosscut*, *golden cock drinks water*, and *golden cock pecks a grain of rice*; the fourth is *retreat and restrain* and *aligned stance pounding punch*; the fifth is *left crosscut*, *dragon and tiger play together*, and *aligned stance punch*; the sixth is *withdraw elbow cover*, *aligned stance pounding punch*, and *white crane flashes its wings*; the seventh is *wheel around and pound*; and the eighth is *sparrow hawk pierces the sky* and *sparrow hawk wheels over*. The name makes sense in terms of

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the overall construction of the routine, the flow of power in the routine, and the applications contained in the routine.

The footwork of the eight postures routine has a distinctive characteristic. When you use a withdrawing step to change the stance, the weight shift must be quick. *Retreat and restrain*, in particular, shifts back to the left foot so that the right foot is able to step forward quickly. Also, when withdrawing the foot for the elbow cover after *aligned stance left punch*, as soon as the left foot withdraws the weight shifts to the left leg so that the right foot can step forward quickly and easily. The shifting between the feet helps you to initiate an advance.

The rhythm of the eight postures routine is focussed on the power launch of the eight key combinations. At each point of power launch, first store power and then launch it. Power must be full, stable, and complete. Pay attention to the bodywork, always storing power before launching: pre-load back to launch forward, pre-load right to launch left. The power launch should be hard and ferocious, and the spirit should be powerful.

NAMES OF THE MOVEMENTS

1. Opening Move (*left santishi*)
2. Sparrow Hawk Folds Its Wings
3. Sparrow Hawk Enters The Woods
4. Reverse Stance Right Horse Form
5. Retreating Left Crosscut
6. Right Splitting Punch
7. Golden Cock Drinks Water
8. Golden Cock Pecks A Grain Of Rice
9. Retreat And Restrain
10. Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch
11. Advance Left Crosscut
12. Dragon And Tiger Play Together
13. Left Aligned Stance Drive, or Crushing punch

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14. Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch
15. White Crane Flashes Its Wings
16. Wheel Around And Pound
17. Sparrow Hawk Pierces The Sky
18. Sparrow Hawk Wheels Over

19. Sparrow Hawk Folds Its Wings
20. Sparrow Hawk Enters The Woods
21. Reverse Stance Right Horse Form
22. Retreating Left Crosscut
23. Right Splitting Punch
24. Golden Cock Drinks Water
25. Golden Cock Pecks A Grain Of Rice
26. Retreat And Restrain
27. Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch
28. Advance Left Crosscut
29. Dragon And Tiger Play Together
30. Left Aligned Stance Drive, or Crushing Punch
31. Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch
32. White Crane Flashes Its Wings
33. Wheel Around And Pound
34. Sparrow Hawk Pierces The Sky
35. Sparrow Hawk Wheels Over

36. Sparrow Hawk Folds Its Wings
37. Sparrow Hawk Enters the Woods
38. Turn Around With A Left Elbow Butt
39. Right Aligned Stance Crosscut
40. Three Basins Touch The Ground
41. Retreat With A Left Splitting Strike
42. Closing Move

1 Opening Move (*left santishi*)

qǐ shì 起勢

Start with *santishi*. Move into *santishi* as usual. (image 3.1)



2. Sparrow Hawk Folds Its Wings

yàozi shùshēn 鷓鴣子束身

ACTION: Shift forward onto the left leg and take a long step forward with the right foot, landing firmly with the knee slightly bent and the foot grabbing the ground. Bring the left foot to the right ankle without touching down. Clench both fists, pulling the left fist back to the belly and punching the right fist forward and down. The right fist finishes outside the left fist at belly height, fist surface down. Press the head up and look at the right fist. (image 3.2)



Pointers

- The right foot and fist arrive simultaneously.
- Take a long step forward, land firmly, and bring the left foot up quickly.
- Keep the elbows protecting the ribs and keep the fists protecting the centreline, like a sparrow hawk tucking in its wings and body.

3. Sparrow Hawk Enters The Woods

yàozi rùlín

鷓鴣子入林

ACTION: Advance the left foot a long step and follow in a half-step with the right foot to form a *santi* stance. Bend the right elbow to drill the fist up to eye height, fist heart in. Turn the trunk 90° rightward. Punch the left fist out from the solar plexus, finishing at solar plexus height with the arm slightly bent and the fist eye up. Bring the right fist to the right temple, turning the fist heart forward as the body turns rightward, keeping the elbow down. Press the head up and look past the left fist. (image 3.3)



Pointers

- The left punch should arrive simultaneously with the left foot.
- Release the shoulders and drop the elbows, reaching forward into the left shoulder. Turn the waist and send the fist forward from the shoulder.
- Be especially careful to keep the right elbow down.

4 Reverse Stance Right Horse Form

àobù yòu mǎxíng

拗步右马形

ACTION : Advance the left foot a half-step and follow in the right foot, rubbing into the ground just behind the left heel. Bring the right fist from the head to strike forward to chest height with the wrist slightly hooked in and the fist heart down. Hook the left fist and press down, then pull back to in front of the right shoulder. Both arms are slightly bent. Press the head up and look past the right fist. (image 3.4)



Pointers

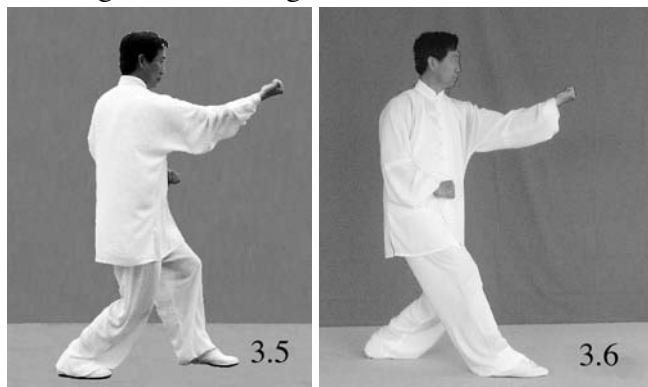
- The right punch arrives simultaneously as the right foot rubs into the ground, so that the power is united.
- First draw a small circle with the right fist and then punch forward, first pulling it back to send it forward. The right elbow is slightly higher than the shoulder and the arm is rounded. Be sure to reach forward with the shoulder, open the upper back and close the chest to issue power.

5 Retreating Left Crosscut

tǔibù zuǒ héngquán 退步左横拳

ACTION 1: Withdraw the right foot a half-step and cut the right elbow in, rotating the fist heart up. Lower the left fist to the chest, turning the fist heart down. Look past the right fist. (image 3.5)

ACTION 2: Bring the left foot past the right foot then back to the left rear, landing with a thump and shifting the weight evenly between the feet. Slide the left fist along under the right arm to drill forward to shoulder height, fist heart turning up. Tuck the right fist over and press down, pulling back to the waist. Press the head up and look past the left fist. (image 3.6)



Pointers

- The right fist should complete the elbow cover as the right foot withdraws. The left fist should complete the crosscut as the left foot lands.
- Be sure to first do a small pre-load forward with the body, to give power to the backward movement.

6 Right Splitting Punch

yòu pīquán 右劈拳

ACTION: Advance the right foot a half-step straight forward and follow in with the left foot a half-step. Bring the right fist to the solar plexus, along the left arm, and then unclench the hand and split forward to chest height. Unclench the left hand and pull it back to the belly. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.7)



Pointers

- The right hand should complete the split as the right foot lands. Reach the right shoulder forward, keeping it released and the elbow down. Exhale and settle the *qi* to the *dantian* to put power into the strike.

7 Golden Cock Drinks Water

jīnjī zhuó shuǐ 金鸡啄水

ACTION 1: Withdraw the right foot to in front of the left foot, lifting the knee with the foot hooked up at the belly of the calf. Stand firmly on the left leg, keeping the knee bent. Clench the right hand and bring the fist back to the belly, then drill it up past the solar plexus and mouth to eyebrow height. Clench the left hand and lift it to the chest. Look at the right fist. (image 3.8)



ACTION 2: Land the right foot with a thump and lift the left foot at the right ankle. Bend the right leg to lower the body. Drill the left fist up along the right arm, then unclench it and split forward and down to chest height. Unclench the right hand and pull it down to the right hip, palm down. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.9)



Pointers

- Coordinate the hands with the action of the right foot. Complete both the pull back and the drill up with the right hand as the right foot withdraws. Split down with the left hand as the right foot lands with a thump.
- The right foot should thump with a settled, powerful feeling. The lower back should be firm, with the buttocks tucked in, and the head pressed up. Release the tension in the shoulders to reach forward, and settle the elbows. The whole body must be stable.

8 Golden Cock Pecks A Grain Of Rice

jīnjī shí mǐ

金鸡食米

ACTION: Advance the left foot a long step and follow in the right foot with a rubbing step to land with a thump just at the left heel. Clench the right fist to punch forward to chest height. Set the left hand on the right wrist. Press the head up and look past the right fist. (image 3.10)



Pointers

- The left foot must take a long step forward. The right punch hits as the right foot lands.

9 Retreat And Restrain

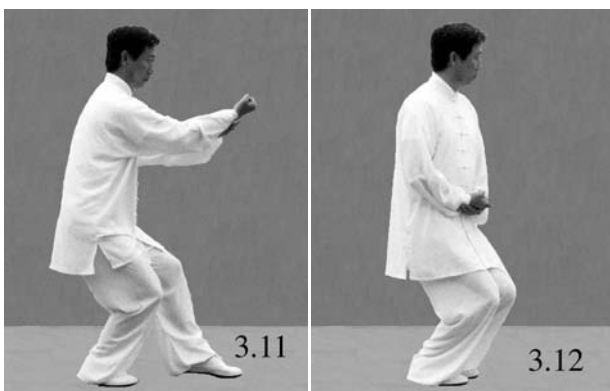
tuībù lēiquán

退步勒拳

ACTION 1: Retreat the right foot a half-step. Circle and turn the right fist over, first turning underneath the left hand and finishing above it, fist heart up. The left hand finishes palm up. Look at the right fist. (image 3.11)

ACTION 2:

Withdraw the left foot to land beside the right foot, immediately shifting onto the left leg. Pull the hands back forcefully into the belly. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.12)



Pointers

- Strike the belly with some force with the joined hands, hitting as the left foot thumps. Settle the *qi* to the *dantian*.
- Be sure to drag the foot back to thump, do not lift it to stamp. Sit into the buttocks, draw in the hips, pull the leg, and thump with the foot.

10 Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch

yòu shùnbù pàoguán

右顺步炮拳

ACTION: Take a long step forward with the right foot and follow in a half-step with the left foot. Clench the left fist and drill it up past the solar plexus to the mouth, then drill it forward and up to nose height. Lift the right fist to the chest, then, as the right foot steps forward and the body turns leftward, punch it forward to chest height, fist eye up. Turn the left fist and pull it back so the fist eye faces the left temple. Keep the left elbow down. Look past the right fist. (image 3.13)



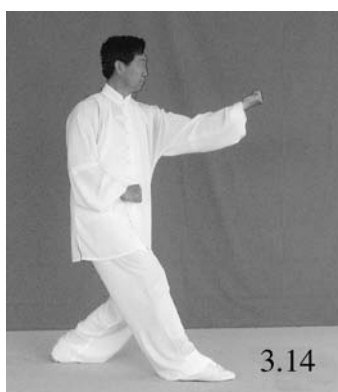
Pointers

- The right punch arrives as the right foot lands. Be sure to reach the right shoulder forward.
- Drill and turn the left fist, do not block directly up. Use the turn of the body and the right shoulder to deflect with the arm.

11 Advance Left Crosscut

jǐnbù zuǒ héngquán 进步左横拳

ACTION: Advance the right foot a half-step and follow in a half-step with the left foot, keeping most weight on the left leg. Lower the left fist to the chest then slide it forward under the right forearm, drilling and turning the fist heart up. Tuck, press down, and pull the right fist back to the belly. The left fist finishes at shoulder height with the left shoulder reaching forward. Press the head up and look past the left fist. (image 3.14)



Pointers

- Use body technique to get power into the crosscut. First pull slightly back, then send the fist down and forward. Pay attention in every technique to use the principle of pre-loading the body prior to launching force.
- The left crosscut should arrive as the right foot lands, and the legs should have a scissoring power between them. Tuck in the

left knee, stabbing it down into the stance. Twist the waist and reach forward into the shoulder, tucking in the buttocks and pressing the head up. This creates a lengthening feeling, with power stretching up and down.

12 Dragon And Tiger Play Together

lóng hǔ xiāngjiāo

龙虎相交

ACTION: Advance the right foot a half-step and settle solidly onto the right leg. Then lift the left knee and kick forcefully forward with the heel to waist height. Punch the right fist straight forward to chest height with the fist eye up and the arm slightly bent. Pull the left fist back to the left side. Keep the right knee slightly bent. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.15)



Pointers

- Be sure to punch and kick quickly, and at exactly the same time. Stand firmly on the right leg. The kicking knee extends fully with the foot pulled back to drive into the heel.
- Keep the trunk straight, be careful not to lean backwards, forwards or sideways.
- Pull the left fist back as the right fist punches, so that the action and force is complete and together.

13 Left Aligned Stance Drive, or Crushing Punch

zuǒ shùnbù bēngquán

左顺步崩拳

ACTION: After completing the kick, land the left foot forward and follow in a half-step with the right foot, putting most weight on the right leg. Punch straight forward with the left fist to chest height, arm slightly bent and fist eye up. Pull the right fist back to the belly. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.16)



Pointers

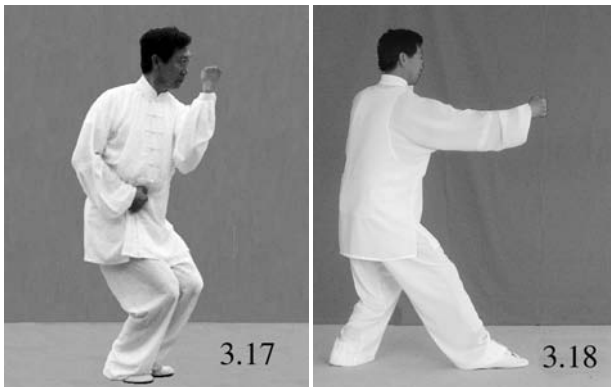
- Three actions are done as one: punch with the left fist, pull the right fist back, and land the left foot. Be sure to coordinate the left and right, up and down, and forward and backward forces.

14 Right Aligned Stance Cannon, or Pounding Punch

yòu shùnbù pàoquán 右顺步炮拳

ACTION 1: Withdraw the left foot to inside the right foot and land it, shifting immediately onto the left leg. Bend the left arm and do an elbow over in front of the chest turning the torso slightly rightward, then drill the left fist up to nose height. Do not move the right fist yet. (image 3.17)

ACTION 2: Take a long step forward with the right foot and follow in a half-step with the left foot. Turn the torso leftward and extend the right shoulder forward to punch the right fist forward with the fist eye up. Rotate the left fist and bring it back to the left temple, fist eye facing the temple and elbow hanging down. Press the head up and look past the right fist. (image 3.18)



Pointers

- First tuck the left elbow in and then drill up with the left fist, combining the actions smoothly.
- Do the elbow cover as the left foot withdraws. Punch the right fist as the right foot steps forward.
- Be sure to shift immediately onto the left leg after the left foot withdraws. This is the only way that you can step the right foot forward smoothly and quickly.

15 White Crane Flashes Its Wings

báihè liàngchì

白鹤亮翅

ACTION 1: Withdraw the left foot a half-step and sit into a horse stance. Lower the fists in front of the body to cross in front of the belly, then brace out. Then drill up to head height with the fist hearts in. Look at the right fist. (images 3.19 and 3.20)



ACTION 2: Without moving the feet, rotate the fists so the fist hearts are out, and circle them to brace out to the sides, arms slightly bent. Look at the right fist. (image 3.21)

ACTION 3: Shift back to the left leg and withdraw the right foot to land with a thump beside the left foot. Bring the fists back to the belly, pulling in forcefully to strike the belly. Press the head up, settle the *qi* to the *dantian*, and look forward. (image 3.22)



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Pointers

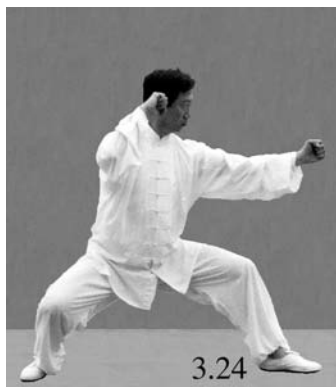
- Sit down as the hands lower and then drill up. After the fists drill up to head height, rotate them to brace out to the sides. When circling them down, keep a wrapping power in the arms. When they pull back to the belly, keep a holding power.
- The weight shifts first left, then right, and then left again. Pull the fists in to hit the belly as the right foot lands. Settle the *qi* to the *dantian* to help launch power forcefully.
- The right foot should land with a thump, not a stamp. This is a raking and settling type of power that unites the whole body.

16 Wheel Around And Pound

fānshēn pào

翻身炮

ACTION: Push off with both legs and turn 180° rightward around in the air. Separate the feet in the air and land in a half-horse stance or a *santi* stance with the left foot forward. Drill the right fist up and bring it to the right temple as the body turns, fist eye in and elbow set down. Punch straight forward to chest height with the left fist, fist eye up. Keep the left arm slightly bent. Press the head up and look past the left fist. (images 3.23 and 3.24)



Pointers

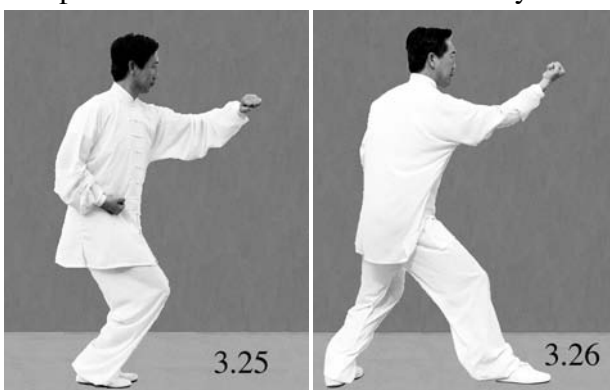
- Push off and land equally with both legs at the same time. There must be no timing difference between them. Land with an opening power between the feet, pressing forward and back. That is, the rear foot presses forward and the lead foot presses back.
- Complete the pounding punch simultaneously with the landing.

17 Sparrow Hawk Pierces The Sky

yàozi zuān tiān 鷓子钻天

ACTION 1: Advance the left foot a half-step and follow in the right foot to the left ankle without touching down. Turn the left fist over to tuck in and press down with the fist heart down and the elbow slightly bent. Lower the right fist to the right side. Look at the left fist. (image 3.25)

ACTION 2: Take a long step forward with the right foot and follow in a half-step with the left foot. Drill the right fist up and forward to nose height, ulnar edge rotated up. Pull the left fist back to the belly. Press the head up and look forward. (image 3.26)

**Pointers**

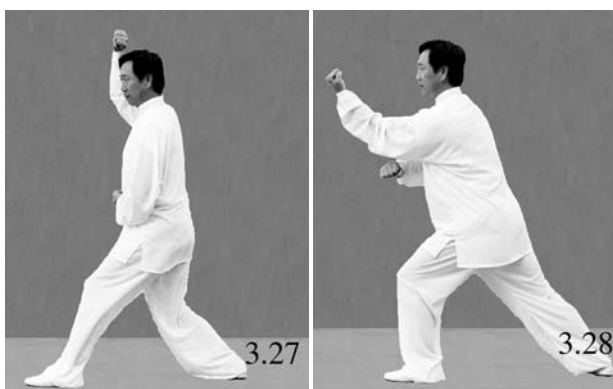
- Land the right drilling punch as the right foot lands. Exhale to put power into the punch.

18 Sparrow Hawk Wheels Over

yàozi fānshēn 鷓子翻身

ACTION 1: Pivot the feet in place, turning around 180° leftward to face back along the line of the routine. Rotate the thumb side of the right fist in and lift the elbow then, as the body turns, bring the fist forward and press down with the fist heart down. Drill the left fist up through the right arm to nose height, fist heart in. At this point the weight is on the left leg and the right fist is pressing down in front of the belly. Look at the left fist. (images 3.27 and 3.28)

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ACTION 2: Lift the right fist with the forearm crossways, passing outside the left arm, to block up above the head. Press the left fist down and settle the elbow, pulling back to in front of the chest. Shift back onto the right leg. Pull the right fist back to in front of the right shoulder. Lift the left elbow and rotate the thumb side in so that the fist eye is on the body, and slide it along the left ribs to stab down at the hip. Look at the left fist. (image 3.29)

ACTION 3: Squat down on the right leg and extend the left leg, to sit into a pouncing stance. Slide the left fist forward along the outside of the left leg, gradually turning the fist eye up. Pull the right fist back to beside the waist. Move the trunk forward as the left fist extends. Look at the left fist. (image 3.30)

