



Tai Chi Grading Program

Developed by Robert Agar-Hutton
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Using 'Kung Fu' sashes to denote grade by colour

Side note, technically speaking Tai Chi is Kung Fu both from the point of view that it can be used as a martial art and also because 'kung fu' literally means skill or expertise, so as an example, a chef has food kung fu.

Many years ago (around 1974 or so) I spent 18 months to two years studying a kung fu style that used coloured sashes. There was a lovely story to explain why each sash colour was chosen. I have used a modification of that system and the system's story is as follows:

When you start you are like a sheet of blank paper ready to accept knowledge and be 'written upon' – The first sash is White.

As a beginner you may have problems doing some of the moves, you might trip or slip, or in competition be knocked down – The second sash is Brown, the colour of the earth.

As you progress you start to learn more, and are like a new shoot growing up from the ground – The third sash is Green.

You grow and your knowledge and ability 'flowers' like a red rose – The fourth sash is Red.

As you get more experienced you transcend the Earth and soar into the sky – The fifth sash is Blue.

You reach a place of confidence and competence where you could learn to teach others – you reach the Sun – The sixth sash is Yellow.

So that gives us White, Brown, Green, Red, Blue, and Yellow.

The studying and grading process

Grading can be done by people who attend our in-person sessions, or our weekly Zoom sessions, or have private training, and who are members of our online pre-recorded program.

However the methodology and content of the training is not (repeat, NOT) designed for students who are grading but is a more organic and less structured process which tries to not only teach the art but teach it in a free flowing and relaxed way.

People wishing to grade need to learn in a more structured way, so that knowledge and ability can be quantified and measured.

It is the student's responsibility to communicate to the instructor where they are in the process and what additional aspects of training, if any, they feel that they should be coached in.

The art (Tai Chi and Qigong) is not taught to children, so as an adult, the student is responsible for their development and for determining their needs. However it is the instructor's responsibility to:

- Prevent injuries by guiding correct practice.
- Lead the student towards their learning objectives.
- Help them keep up a steady learning pace, neither too fast nor too slow.
- Be available (within reason) to answer questions. And encourage the act of asking questions.

The process by which a grade is obtained (like in most martial arts) is via demonstrating knowledge and proficiency. The standards for both of those increase (one might say dramatically increase) as the journey through the grades progresses. So the grade from white to brown sash is much simpler than from green to blue.

The actual grading can be done in-person or online via Zoom. Obviously, in-person is always better and it is mandatory for obtaining the grade of yellow sash.

There are no artificial barriers to progression, so there is no mandatory time between grades. If you have learned the necessary material and can show that you both understand it and can perform it to the required standard then you are worthy of the grade.

However, there are some aspects of Tai Chi, generally to do with deep relaxation and whole body movement that take time, and that time and practice has to be invested into the process to gain both the martial and (more importantly) the health and wellness benefits that Tai Chi and Qigong offer.

The Tai Chi curriculum

The Agar-Hutton Tai Chi Academy's curriculum is one that matures and changes as the years go by, but the 2024 curriculum is:

- Starting exercises including:
 - Movement exercises; Gentle stretching exercises; Joint mobility exercises; Balance exercises; Co-ordination exercises.
- Tai chi forms:
 - Eight Move One Step form
 - Slow Power form
 - Eight Move Energy form
 - Short Balance form
 - Dynamic form
 - Monkey Form
 - Long Balance form
 - 24 Move short Yang style form
 - 13 Move short Sun style form
 - Fast Power Form
 - Four Winds Form
- Qigong:
 - 5 Move Qigong
 - 5 Elements Qigong
 - Heaven and Earth Qigong
 - Zhan Zhuang
 - Shi Ba Shi
- Floating hands exercises:
 - Sets 1 to 15
- Partner work
 - Body awareness and relaxation
 - Energy awareness
 - Strength exercises
 - Self-defence exercises

Mapping the curriculum to the grades

Starting exercises:

- Exercises comprise a virtually endless number of different ones and will be taught both in prearranged sets and as additions and variations to ones you have learned.
- Some exercises are grade specific but most are taught to suit and develop the individual.

Tai chi forms:

- White sash
 - Eight Move One Step form
- Brown sash
 - Slow Power form
 - Eight Move Energy form
- Green sash
 - Short Balance form
 - Dynamic form
- Red sash
 - Monkey Form
 - Long Balance form
- Blue sash
 - 24 Move short Yang style form
 - 13 Move short Sun style form
- Yellow sash
 - Fast Power Form
 - Four Winds Form

Qigong:

- White sash
 - 5 Move Qigong
- Brown sash
 - 5 Elements Qigong
- Green sash
 - Heaven and Earth Qigong
- Red sash
 - Zhan Zhuang
- Blue sash
 - Shi Ba Shi

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Floating hands exercises:

- White sash
 - No exercises
- Brown sash
 - Sets 1 and 2
- Green sash
 - Sets 3 to 6
- Red sash
 - Sets 7 to 10
- Blue sash
 - Sets 11 to 13
- Yellow sash
 - Sets 14 and 15

Partner work:

By its definition 'Partner work' requires a partner thus it can only be taught if the student has a partner to work with or can attend in person training, sessions, or courses. The training is both incremental and personalised.

- Body awareness and relaxation
- Energy awareness
- Strength exercises
- Self-defence exercises

Partner work is optional until the level of Red sash but is necessary for obtaining the levels of Blue and Yellow sash.

Grading Process Request Form

I the undersigned wish to start the process of grading in the Agar-Hutton Tai Chi Academy's Tai Chi and Qigong arts.

My details are:

Full Name:

Date of birth:/...../.....

Address:

.....

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Telephone number:

Email address:

Signature:

The above form may be returned in person, via post to the address below or scanned and sent as an email attachment to robert@ahcca.co.uk.

To: Robert Agar-Hutton
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