



# 10-Minute Primer CHINESE WUSHU

With  
Instructional  
DVD

# **10**-Minute Primer **CHINESE WUSHU**

Zhou Qingjie



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

中 zhōng—similar to *jung* in *jungle*  
国 guó—the sound *g* plus *war*  
武 wǔ—*woo*  
术 shù—*shoe*

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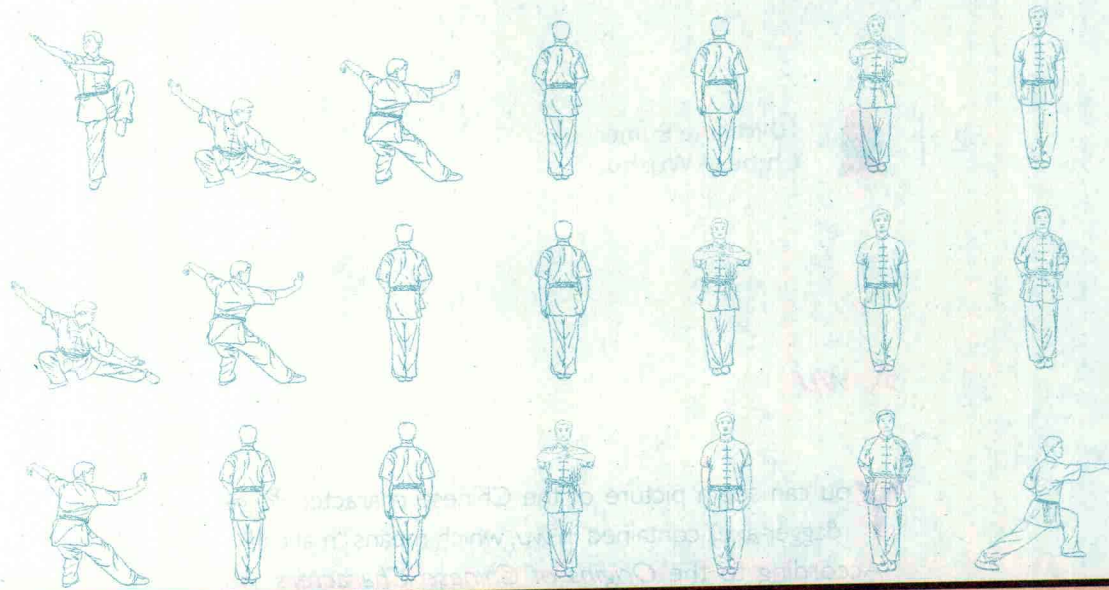
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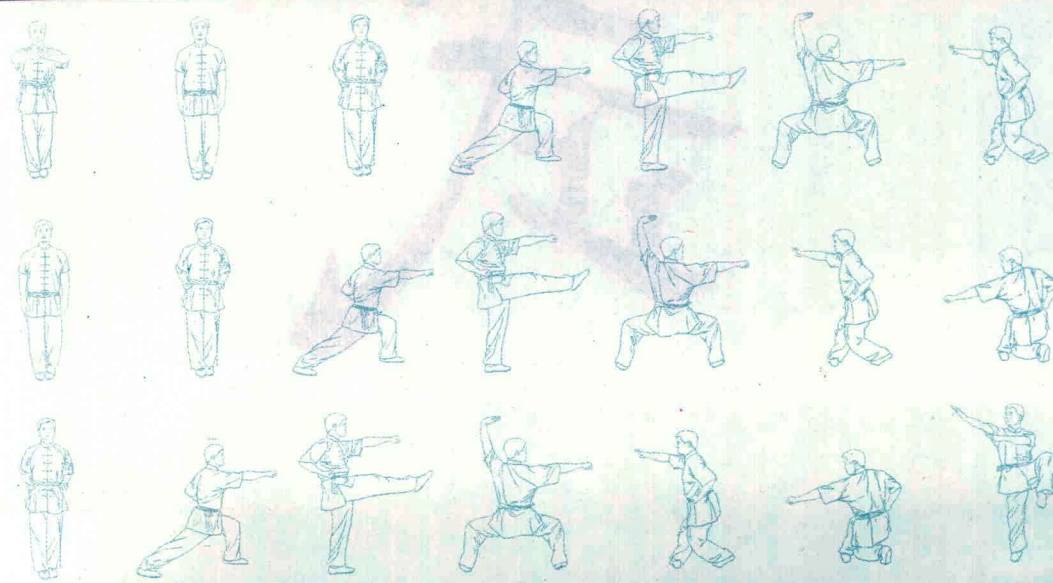
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# What Is Chinese Wushu?





## 武 *WU*

**Y**ou can see a picture of the Chinese character 戈 *ge* (dagger-axe) contained in *wu*, which means “martial.”

According to the *Origins of Chinese Characters*, *wu* means “to stop fighting.” It means using *wu* to forbid violence, eliminate turmoil, and stop fighting, thus seeking stability and peace.

*Wu* also has another meaning: “The best of martial strength is demonstrated by compassion and reputation—convince people without the use of arms.”

术 *shu*

**S***hu* refers to art, technique, methods and tactics.

## Chinese Wushu

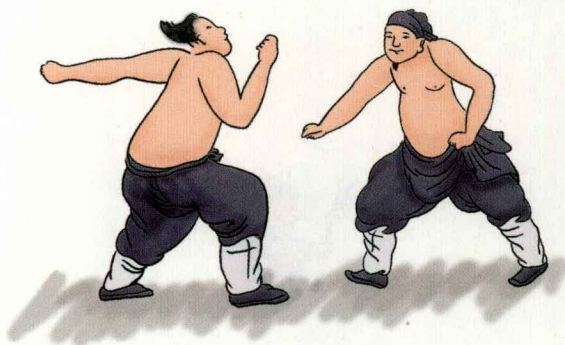
**C**hinese wushu is a Chinese traditional sport with the art of attack and defense as its main content, and with the routines, fighting and practice of skills as the exercise forms, which pays equal attention to internal and external cultivation.





## Kung Fu

The word “kung fu” originated from “*da gongfu*,” as pronounced in local Guangdong dialect, meaning “practicing wushu.” As people from Guangdong early on began to teach wushu in other parts of the world, and since Bruce Lee, the world’s kung fu master, often used the word “kung fu” in his martial arts movies, people in many countries and regions became more familiar with “kung fu” than with “wushu.” However, “kung fu” and “wushu” are in fact the same thing, with the word “wushu” being formally more standard.

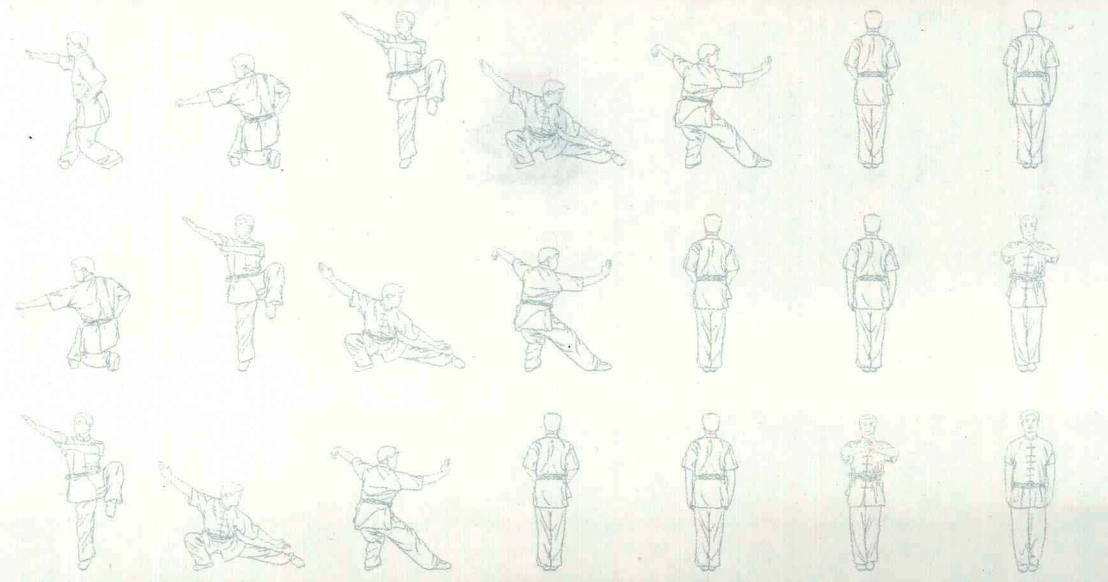
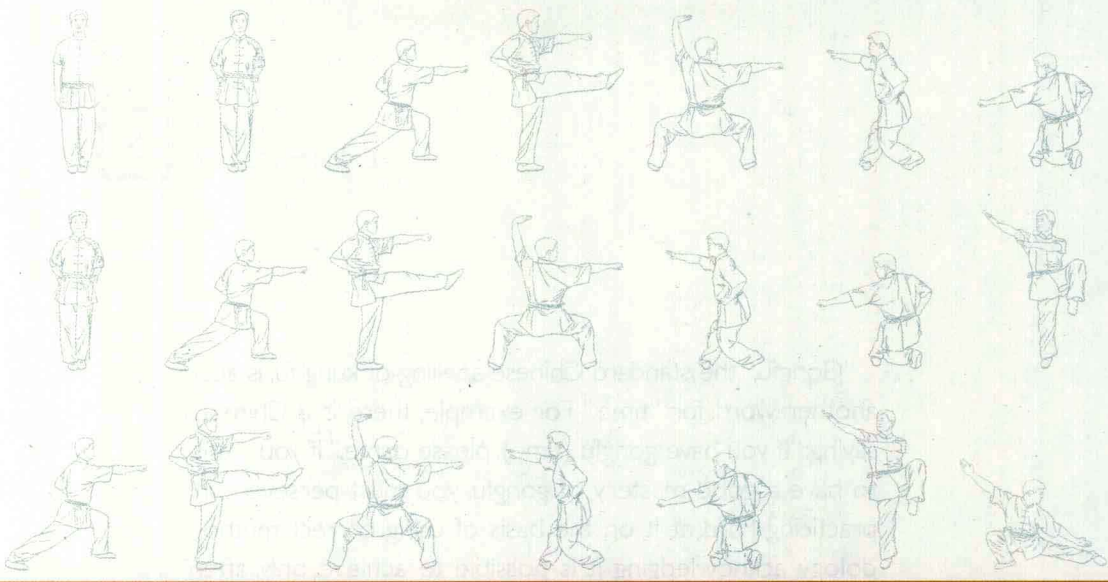


Thirty-two Changquan (“long boxing”) technique from Ming Dynasty General Qi Jiguang’s *A Treatise on Efficiency*

“Gongfu,” the standard Chinese spelling of kung fu, is also another word for “time.” For example, there is a Chinese saying: “If you have gongfu (time), please come.” If you want to have a good mastery of gongfu, you must persevere in practicing hard at it on the basis of using correct methodology, acknowledging it is possible to achieve only after years of consistent effort. Today, people often use “practicing wushu” and “practicing gongfu” interchangeably.

**“Gongfu is the crystallization of time and sweat.”**









## Chinese Kung Fu Films

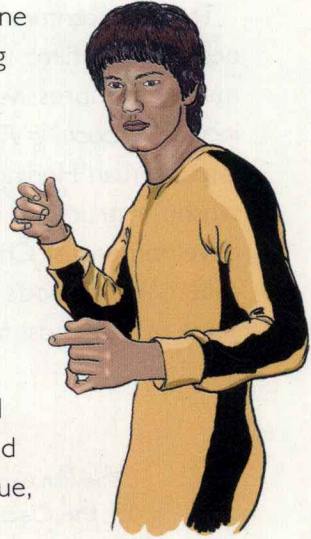
Chinese kung fu films have constituted a major contribution to world filmdom. For decades these movies have been very popular in all parts of the world.

The rapid rise of Chinese kung fu films generally benefited from the martial arts novels that were very popular for centuries. The Shanghai Star Co. Ltd. in 1928 produced the first Chinese kung fu film, *Set the Honglian Temple on Fire*. But no further kung fu films were produced on the mainland in the subsequent period because of wars and political turmoil. However, the 1940s and 1950s saw the first upsurge of kung fu film production in Hong Kong. For example, there were as many as 77 films in the Huang Feihong series. We can thus say, Chinese kung fu films were born on the mainland, but flourished in Hong Kong.

The development of Chinese kung fu films reached its zenith in the period from the 1960s to the 1990s. This period was not only an important stage of the internationalization of Chinese kung fu films, but saw the emergence of many master directors of martial arts films (e.g. Hu Jinquan, Zhang Che and Liu Jialiang) and international stars (e.g. Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li).

Among the Chinese kung fu film stars up to now, the

most influential and enduring was none other than Bruce Lee. The unyielding and dauntless spirit of fearing no brutal enemy and preferring death over submission, along with the Chinese martial arts that Bruce Lee demonstrated in each and every of his kung fu films, have left an indelible impression on every cinemagoer in the world. In fact, the core value of the Chinese kung fu films represented by Bruce Lee is upholding justice and persisting in efforts to pursue the true, the good and the beautiful.



It needs to be especially noted that the word “kung fu” was included in English dictionaries entirely because of Bruce Lee’s global influence. It is incredible that in the decades after Bruce Lee became popular and even after his death, his fans in many countries still cherish the memory of their favorite hero—Bruce Lee. Bruce Lee seems to have become the embodiment of and synonym for “Kung Fu.”

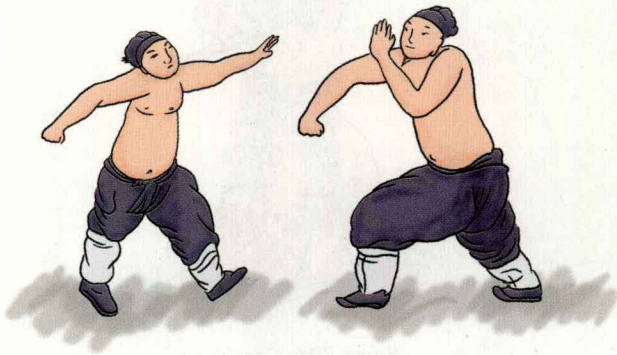


The 21st century has ushered in a new period of Chinese kung fu films. Several Chinese martial arts films have made an impressive impact on world film circles. They include *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Hero*, and *Seven Swords*. Yuan Heping and Yuan Kui, two international-class wushu instructors, successfully created a space for the development of Chinese kung fu films in the globalized culture. Hollywood's *Matrix*, *Kill Bill* and *Dead or Alive* are some of their most famous masterpieces.

The film *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, winner of the Oscar for Best Picture, is a demonstration of chivalrous swordsmen and swordswomen fighting atop bamboo trees, sometimes resembling lightening and thunder, and other times more like the delicate bamboo leaves. These gongfu feats, which had earlier only been seen in Chinese gongfu novels, captivated moviegoers around the world. Above all, such memorable scenes provided artistic thrills full of Eastern philosophical flavor to Western cinemagoers, who were more used to military confrontations between two armies. Who would have thought that blood-filled fight scenes could also be so artistically beautiful and entertaining!

## Wushu in Traditional Chinese Operas

Chinese traditional opera uses “singing, acting, speaking and fighting” as unique forms of artistic performance. Whether in form or in content, the “fighting” aspect is closely related to movements of attack and defense in wushu. Moreover, the “eighteen kinds of weapons” used in wushu have been used on the theatrical stage to display the fighting and battle scenes as required by the plot. After years of constant development and refinement, Peking opera performers include *wusheng* (actor playing a martial role), *wudan* (actress playing a martial role), *wujing* (painted-face



Thirty-two Changquan (“long boxing”) technique from  
Ming Dynasty General Qi Jiguang’s *A Treatise on Efficiency*



actor playing a martial role), and *wuchou* (acrobatic clown).

Many opera masters have mastered effective wushu skills, with some even reaching the highest attainments in wushu. For example, Tan Xinpei, reputed as the “king of performers” in Peking opera for his superb skill that assimilated the special techniques of all schools, was originally an armed escort. When he acted as Shi Xiu (hero from *Outlaws of the Marsh*) in the opera *Mount Cuiping*, he performed Liuhe swordplay using a real sword, with astonishingly superb skill that often inspired deafening cheering from



*Farewell My Concubine*