

TOURNAMENT RULES & PROCEDURES  
FOR TAIJIQUAN EVENTS  
developed by  
The Magic Tortoise Taijiquan School

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Part 1: TAIJIQUAN FORMS & WEAPONS EVENTS

Evaluators: three, four, or five evaluators. A chief evaluator manages each event, coordinates the work of the evaluators, and announces scores. The chief evaluator may offer comment during the verbal evaluation, but does not participate in scoring unless only two other evaluators are available.

Time allotted to each participant in solo forms and solo weapons events is divided into three parts:

- 1) PERFORMANCE: in solo forms events, 3–3.5 minutes. Warning sounded at both times. In solo weapons events: minimum of 1.5 minutes.)
- 2) EVALUATION: comments fit into a maximum total time for all evaluators of 3.5 minutes. Participants in forms events also receive an evaluation sheet from each evaluator.
- 3) SCORING: If there are three evaluators, the composite score is the average of the three. If there are four or five evaluators, high and low scores are dropped. The final score is the composite score minus any deductions made by the chief evaluator.

SCORING CRITERIA.

Scores represent each evaluator's holistic impression of the following categories, with a possible total of 6 points for Posture & Stance, 2 points for Unity, and 2 points for Vigor.

POSTURE & STANCE are the main factors which determine whether the player's forms are correct.

UNITY (integrity) is the key to coordination.

VIGOR (energy, spirit). The impression of vigor reveals the player's overall technical level.

DEDUCTIONS.

If directed to do so by the tournament coordinator, the chief evaluator deducts 0.1 for a performance that is five seconds short of the minimum or over the maximum required time, 0.2 for a performance that is ten seconds short or over, and so forth. In solo weapons events, the chief evaluator deducts .5 if the weapon or any part of it falls to the ground. There is no overtime deduction for weapons performances.

Part 2: TAIJIQUAN PUSH-HANDS

OFFICIALS.

The officiating committee consists of the following members: referee (1), judges (3 or more), timekeeper (1), scorekeeper (1).

## SCORING CRITERIA.

A competitor's score will be based on his/her perceived ability to demonstrate composure, balance, versatility, strategy, taijiquan's postural and dynamic principles (e.g., well-timed stepping), and skill in matching, yielding, sticking, neutralizing, and returning. Points are NOT awarded for off-balancing an opponent per se. Judges must ask themselves if the technique which caused the off-balance was truly a taijiquan technique! Did the competitor lead his/her opponent to emptiness? Did it seem relatively effortless? Was the opponent's force neutralized before the off-balance, or was force used against force?

Judges give EQUAL weight to three factors: 1) successful attack--unbalancing the opponent while retaining balance, 2) successful neutralization--keeping balance and deflecting an attack, which may even cause the opponent to lose balance, and 3) postural dynamics. Postural dynamics, successful neutralizations, and successful attacks are valued equally. Therefore, a competitor who unbalances his/her opponent more times, yet seems inept at neutralization and displays poorer postural dynamics, will lose the match. Judges may also consider the "difficulty factor" involved for a competitor dealing with a particularly forceful opponent.

## SCORING RANGE.

In some tournaments, scores theoretically begin at 10.0 and are reduced based on observed performance. In this format, competitors begin with a score of 7.5; their score will go down if they use force, and up if they use finesse defined by the employment of taiji principles.

UNDISCIPLINED LEVEL: 7.39 and below Judges must assign scores in this range to players who give an overall impression either of inexperience or inability to abide by the principles of taijiquan. These players use force, speed, or techniques that properly belong to other arts such as wrestling, shuaijiao, judo, etc., or they seem unable to control their movements so as to curb their own application of force and resistance, or to redirect their opponent's use of the same. The score does not necessarily imply that a player is a beginner. Players who receive scores in this range may have many years of experience in taijiquan and even in competition.

BEGINNING LEVEL: 7.4-7.69 In matches where the interaction is smooth, soft, but predominantly unremarkable, judges must assign an interaction score of 7.5, and individual scores for both competitors in the 7.4-7.6 range: no higher because strategy and versatility are lacking; no lower because force, resistance, and speed have been curbed. The 7.4-7.6 range is reserved for namby-pamby interactions, and for individual competitors who don't seem to use force and yet don't really try much of anything. If opponents are mismatched on either side of this range (one is using force and the other is trying to lift the match to a higher level), the interaction score should be either 7.3 or below, or 7.7 or above, depending on which impression is strongest, and one competitor should be given an individual score of 7.3 or less, and the other should

receive a score of 7.7 or above. The 7.4-7.6 range is NOT a "middle ground" between use of force and intermediate level play. It must be used only to classify interactions or individual performances that are nondescript. It is possible for the interaction score to be in this range, and for ONE competitor to score slightly above or below the range.

**INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: 7.7-7.99** This person clearly is attempting to apply taijiquan's soft strength much of the time. Posture may exhibit some faults (e.g., the head may be down, the foot and leg work may be flawed) and there may be some awkwardness and frequent brief lapses into strength and resistance; this player may follow the movements of a superior player, but attempts at control will look more like interruptions than creativity; they will appear competent and even fluid with an equally matched or less-able opponent, but there are few interchanges where he/she is able to maintain softness while demonstrating the control and connectedness of more advanced players.

**SUPERIOR LEVEL: 8.0-8.49** A score from 8.0-8.9 indicates one who can use four ounces to deflect and redirect in most cases and is rarely off balance; yielding is well-developed, so that the opponent is largely unable to affect the impression of calm but energetic control. While there may be some faults, and strength may at times be in evidence, competitors receiving scores in this range do not cling to postures of resistance, and seem to be able to lead the flow of the match through softness.

**ADVANCED LEVEL: 8.5 and above** A score of 9.0 or above should be given if a competitor can keep their opponent off balance gently, effortlessly, and seemingly at will; this competitor conveys a strong impression of connectedness and control, with few if any faults. Their strategy is versatile, displaying a variety of techniques, and their timing is superb.

#### FIELD.

In limited step events, the area of play, or field, is an alley 4 feet wide and 10 feet long, with sides marked by tape, but with no tape at the ends. The center of this alley will be marked by a cross ("center mark") of two 2-foot pieces of tape, oriented so that one piece is perpendicular to the sides, and one piece is on the center of the alley, parallel to the sides. In moving step events, the area will be a circle 21 feet in diameter.

#### EQUIPMENT.

Participants wear a T-shirt, martial arts pants, and athletic or kung fu shoes. No long sleeved shirts or short pants are permitted. Contestants may not wear any objects (including jewelry) that may cause injury to themselves or to their opponents. Fingernails must be clipped as short as possible, and will be inspected by the officials.

#### TARGET AREAS.

Contact may be made from below the base of the neck to above the coccyx or bladder area. Pushing the head, neck, bladder area, hip joint, or leg is illegal.

#### FORMAT.

Tournament organizers may elect to sponsor one or more events from a series of progressively more challenging formats:

1. Single Hand Limited One Step (single "shuffle" steps separated by 2+ seconds)
2. Single Hand Limited Two Step (up to 2 "shuffle" steps separated by 2+ seconds)
3. Double Hand Limited One Step (single "shuffle" steps separated by 2+ seconds)
4. Double Hand Limited Two Step (up to 2 "shuffle" steps separated by 2+ seconds)
5. Single Hand Moving Step
6. Double Hand Moving Step
7. Free Sparring

This progression represents increasing degrees of difficulty, each successive event demanding a higher level of control and skill on the part of the contestants.

#### STEPPING.

In limited one-step events, competitors may take single "shuffle" steps forward or backward, starting with either the front or the back foot, but may not reverse the stance, i.e., the front foot must stay forward. Single steps must be spaced at least two seconds apart, timed so as not to appear to be a rush or charge. In this limited step format, competitors must keep to the orientation of the center line; they may not step outside the alley to defend or to gain an advantage. In limited two-step events, competitors may take two steps at a time.

#### PROCEDURE.

1. PRELIMINARIES. All competitors in a weight division meet with the referee prior to the start of that division. The referee fills out a bye chart, based on information from the competitors.
2. SALUTE. Before each match, the two competitors salute the referee and then each other.
3. TIME. One match consists of two 90-second rounds with a 15-second break in between rounds. The tournament director may make the rounds longer or shorter depending on the number of entrants and the available time. Timing is continuous unless fairness dictates that the competitors be reset, or safety demands that the action be stopped, or a competitor has committed a violation.
4. STARTING. Opponents face each other and each places his/her foot on the center mark (see "Field," above)-- right foot forward for the first

round, left foot forward for the second round. When prepared to begin they make contact with the back of the right wrist in the first round, and left wrist in the second. In two-hand events, they also touch their opponent's elbow with the open palm of their free hand. The referee instructs them to move so as to get accustomed to each other, and when both seem ready, the referee says "Time begin" accompanied by a hand signal. At this signal, the timekeeper starts timing, and the competitors perform a minimum of two additional revolutions before initiating any techniques.

5. CONTINUOUS PLAY. The referee does NOT stop the action when a competitor is off balance, as no points are awarded for this.

6. VIOLATIONS. If the referee sees a violation, he/she says "Stop!" to stop action and timing. If a judge sees a violation, he/she says "Stop" as a signal to the referee, who confirms the judge's call. See below for a list of violations. A competitor will be disqualified after 3 (three) personal and/or technical violations or 1 (one) serious personal violation. The inability to avoid these violations indicates a competitor's unreadiness to participate in a public demonstration of taijiquan skills. The referee may issue a verbal "caution" at his/her discretion to one or both competitors in the first instance of a personal or technical violation that seems to have been inadvertent or accidental.

7. SCORES. After every match, the judges and the referee first score the interaction (their overall impression of the level of play in the match). If there are four or more scores, high and low are dropped, and the final interaction score is the average of the middle scores. Judges then assign the competitor they believe to be the winner a score which is above the A.I.S., and the other competitor is given a score below the average interaction score (A.I.S.)

8. THE TOP 50% ADVANCE. Competitors whose scores are in the top 50% of scores within one complete tier of the bye chart or tournament tree move on to the next tier. This means that both competitors from a single match may advance, while neither competitor in another match in the same tier will advance.

9. MEDALS. In the finals, the winner is the competitor with the highest score. His/her opponent takes second place, and the competitor with the third highest score in the penultimate tier takes third.

#### PERSONAL VIOLATIONS.

##### Single Hand Events

1. Using techniques excessive in strength
2. Grabbing the opponent's clothes
3. Any grabbing, pinching, or holding (use of pulldown may be considered cause for disqualification)
4. Contacting an illegal target area
5. Elbow or shoulder strikes (may be called as a serious personal violations if forceful). Soft use of shoulder to nudge is permitted
6. Arm entrapment (a milder form of joint locking, see "Serious

Personal Violations")

6. Reversing the stance or stepping outside the alley to gain an advantage. A competitor who inadvertently reverses stance will be cautioned.
7. Endangering oneself (as by holding the head down and forward so that it is difficult for one's opponent to avoid making contact with it)
8. Charging (taking a rapid series of steps so as to overwhelm an opponent: two or more in single hand events, three or more in two-step events)

Double Hand Events

1. Using techniques excessive in strength
2. Grabbing the opponent's clothes
3. Double grabbing (gripping the opponent with both hands)
4. Holding on (gripping the opponent with one or both hands or reaching around the opponent's side or back) to prevent loss of balance
5. Attacking an illegal target area
6. Reversing the stance or stepping outside the alley to gain an advantage
7. Endangering oneself (as by holding the head down and forward so that it is difficult for one's opponent to avoid making contact with it)
8. Charging (taking a rapid series of steps so as to overwhelm an opponent: two or more in single hand events, three or more in two-step events)

SERIOUS PERSONAL VIOLATIONS.

1. Striking, hitting, punching
2. Using the head to attack
3. Using the legs, knees, or feet to attack
4. Twisting or locking the joints (grappling or qin na (chin na))
5. Using pressure points
6. Pulling hair or beard
7. Attacking the groin area
8. Using any technique determined to cause injury to the opponent
9. Unsportsmanlike conduct

TECHNICAL VIOLATIONS.

1. Not following the instructions of the referee
2. Not completing the mandatory revolutions
3. Receiving coaching during the round