

# USE OF PARTNER PRACTICE IN T'AI CHI CHIH® CLASSES



**Partner Practice** is one of the methods considered to be a “Best Practice,” one that delivers results in an efficient and effective way.

**By definition, Best Practice** is a technique, method, process, or activity that is **more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique or method.**

Best practices can also be defined as the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best results) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time for large numbers of people. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one's disposal to ensure success. There are 441 million Internet sites for “best practices.”  
-From Wikipedia.org

## WHY USE PARTNER PRACTICE

**Years of scientific research and studies in education confirm the benefits** of using Partner Practice in teaching a skill and improving performance. It is a modified form of Cooperative Learning Groups, which gives students control of their learning, stimulates their interactions and understanding, and improves their motivation to learn.

**On- task behavior and interest in learning are both strengthened.**

Working with another student empowers the learner and creates confidence. As social beings, people learn best in a context in which interaction is expected and encouraged. It allows people to relax and enjoy the process of learning a new skill.

**It is based on the Behavioral Coaching model** that most successful businesses use today to rise to the top in their field. Worldwide, the use of coaching, mentoring and working cooperatively has become the most reliable model for enhancing performance and productivity. This is true in the work place as well as in sports and education.

### **Mutual and Reciprocal Learning**

Partner Practice provides a dynamic learning activity for all students, no matter what their level of proficiency or how long they have practiced. It empowers all learners.

## **Purpose of Partner Practice**

- To improve students awareness and performance of the TCC form
- To improve and enhance the flow of chi for each student
- To provide collaborative interaction of students for mutual support
- To stimulate learning and promote more relaxed TCC movements
- To increase student awareness of TCC principles and concepts of how to move
- To provide a “mirror” for the student to see how they are moving
- To move students to their “learning edge” where new learning can occur
- To help students discover “what they know ... and what they don’t know.”
- To insure that all students are learning and exploring TCC effectively
- To help students understand how to move effortlessly

## **WHEN TO USE PARTNER PRACTICE**

- Use it in all classes, both small and large, starting on the first class.
- Use it regularly, so students will expect to work with each other.
- Use it with beginning and continuing TCC students.
- Use it with seniors or those with disabilities by having them talk about something they have learned, rather than show it.
- Use it even if the class is only one hour long.

## **HOW TO USE PARTNER PRACTICE**

### **Role-play to Demonstrate/ Model how you want the Students to Interact:**

Teacher selects a student to interact with, demonstrating what to do during partner practice. Students need to see what to do, how to do it, and what to say.

### **Picking a Partner:**

Tell students to go stand next to someone they don’t know or someone they haven’t worked with yet. Discourage mother/daughter or husband/wife partners working in class. They can do that at home. Have them introduce themselves to each other, say their name.

### **Give Clear Directions:**

Ask one to be the leader (the one on the left, etc.) and the other to follow. Tell them how long they will work together: “We will work for 5-10 minutes with our partner. (Usually they want more time.)

### **State the Goal for the Practice:**

“Today we will focus on softness...” (or weight shift, slowness, flowing from center, or one movement. Pick one movement or principle to focus on.)

### **Learning while Moving:**

Tell them they may talk to each other and make comments/suggestions while they are moving, but **keep moving**. The goal is to get it kinesthetically, in the body, not just as a concept or idea.

### **Positive Feedback:**

Partners start by giving positive feedback, what they notice that looks correct. Praise is always effective in relaxing the partner and giving them confidence and to state what is correct for this form.

### **Observations and Positive Feedback:**

“Your posture looks OK. I see nice vertical alignment.”

”Your stance looks comfortable for you.”

“When you begin the movement, I see you softening the knees and sinking down.”

“Your feet are in the right position. I am seeing softness in your movements.”

“Your wrists and hands look relaxed. I can see flow when you move.”

“Your shoulders look relaxed and soft.”

“It looks as if you are floating as you move.”

“You are moving forward and back at the same level.”

“It looks effortless.”

### **Feedback and Correction: Ask Questions / Make Suggestions**

“How does that movement feel?” “Is it comfortable?”

“Do you feel stable or a little off balance?”

“Do you feel tension in your back, in your legs, etc.?”

“When you move forward, it looks like you are leaning forward like this...  
(demonstrate)

“Try making your arm movements smaller....how does that feel?”

“I see tension in the legs ...

“Can you adjust the width of your stance?”

“Allow your heel to stay down on the floor until the last moment of the forward movement.”

“Does that feel more stable now?” “It looks smoother now.”

### **Closing:**

Ring a bell / signal to the group to finish: “Two more minutes, and then we will close.” They may thank their partner or bow to each other. Now take 3-5 minutes

for partners to talk to each other about the practice: What did you notice?  
What did you learn? How did it go?

### **Group Closing and Review:**

Now come back to the group circle and bring up 1-2 key points that you want to emphasize to the whole group. “Today the question of \_\_\_\_\_ came up and many of you noticed that \_\_\_\_\_.”

Form a circle and close with Rocking Motion- this is a great way to unite the group and bring the focus back to silence and stillness.

## **WHAT TO USE IN PARTNER PRACTICE**

### **PRINCIPLES OF TCC MOVEMENT**

Stance/Foot Position:

Vertical Alignment of Spine / posture (no leaning)

Complete Weight Shift: yinping and yangping

Flowing from Center

Softness and Continuity

Rooted and Grounded

Natural Breathing

### **THE 19 TCC MOVEMENT PATTERNS**

(Rocking Motion, etc... )

## **THE BENEFITS OF PARTNER PRACTICE**

- Provides regular opportunities to **improve your own TCC form.**
- Provides opportunities to become more **self-directed** in learning.
  
- Provides regular opportunities **to explore skills in** a safe space.
- Encourages **collaboration** rather than competition.
  
- Helps students **acquire and use TCC vocabulary.**
- Helps students **become keen observers.**
  
- Provides **positive and constructive feedback** to students about how they move.
- Stimulates **multi-sensory learning:** visual, auditory, kinesthetic and motor.

- Provides **opportunities to interact in positive and supportive ways**, while enhancing their own learning.
- **Speeds up the rate of learning** for all students.
- **Stimulates critical thinking skills/ reflection** about what they have learned.
- Encourages students to **explore what they know and what they don't know**.
- Encourages a **give-and-take relationship in learning** with another student.
- Is one of the most effective methods to **maximize learning** for all students.
- Like coaching, it **helps develop competencies**, to deepen understanding, to remove blocks and misunderstandings, and to achieve *sustainable* changes.
- Uses a Best Practices method to **facilitate learning for all students**.
- Develops a **sense of confidence and ease in learning**.
- **Empowers student learning** in the most natural setting of interacting with classmates and sharing/comparing ideas.
- **Allows the teacher to give special attention to those who need** it in a natural setting that is collegial, not confrontive.

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