

Movement Form
套路 (tao lu)

Forest Dragon Exercises

*“In karate,
there is no advantage in the first attack.”
- Gichin Funakoshi, Founder, Shotokan*

The formal exercises or movement forms, known in Chinese as *tao lu*, provide a sequence of movements that are meant to develop coordination and balance as well as flexibility and stamina. At the same time, these movements provide the basics of the defense aspect of Forest Dragon exercises. They are performed as if the student were actually fighting, sometimes several opponents at once. For this reason they are sometimes referred to as fighting forms. These forms are a way of practicing techniques in a practical and less boring manner than simply simple repetitions of basic techniques.

There are five Forest Dragon forms, one for each of the five phases. They reflect the nature of each of the five elements and are designed to convey different concepts as the student progresses through the five phases of development.

This book does not go into detail on basic techniques such as a proper stance or how to form a proper fist. I chose to omit this level of detail for two reasons. For those only interested in the health benefits of the exercise these things are not that important. For those interested in the combative aspects of the art, I did not feel that these could be addressed properly in this brief training manual and highly recommend to the student that they find a good teacher to work with on proper technique, fighting concepts, and applications.

Many beginning students only view the forms as a set of techniques that can be used in application of “real world” situation. They are that indeed – but they are much more.

Forest Dragon Exercises

Each technique in a form is an example of a concept and how that concept can be applied in a specific situation. For example, a move in a form might be to step backward and block and then shift the weight forward and throwing a punch. This is a very simple technique that can be used to effectively defend against a front kick. But the real benefit is training the mind and body to evade an attack and then counterattack by moving the body effectively. The exact block and counter used with this concept can be varied to adapt to specific situations in many ways. Students are encouraged to be mindful of the movements and to let their minds explore the possibilities. That's what keeps it interesting.

The following conventions are used in the descriptions of the movements in their direction and orientation. The directions *north*, *south*, *east*, and *west* are used to describe direction or orientation relative to your surroundings. For example, if you are facing the front of a room when you begin, the front of the room represents *north*, the back of the room represents *south*, *east* is towards your right, and *west* is towards your left. These directions, like the walls of the room, remain the same from the beginning to the end of the exercise.

The directions *left*, *right*, *front*, and *back* are used to describe the direction of movement relative to your own body, specifically your hips. For example, if you are facing *north*, *left* will be towards the *west* wall; however, if you turn towards the *south*, *left* will be towards the *east* wall.

All forms begin and end with a bow. The bow in Chinese styles, also known as a salutation, is often complex compared to the typical bow used in Japanese schools and varies from one school to another.

For the sake of simplicity this book will use a “courtesy bow.” This is simply making a fist with the right hand and covering it with the left hand. If you are training with an instructor, they will give you a specific way of executing the full formal salutation.

Forest Dragon Exercises

Young Dragon *Earth*

Young Dragon introduces the student to some of the basic concepts of Pai Lum including commonly used stances, basic blocking techniques, several hand strikes, and the front kick. Movement is fairly simple, primarily forward and backward, side to side, and focuses on a single opponent in any given sequence of techniques.



Begin with the hands at your sides and the feet together in attention stance. Perform a courtesy bow. Move the left foot to the left into a natural stance. The feet should be approximately shoulder width apart.



1. Shift weight over right foot as you turn hips to the left. The right hand rises north to face level slapping toward the left. Left foot steps to rear into right back stance; right hand continues circling counter-clockwise in lower level block, left hand pulls back into fist in guard position in front of solar plexus.

Forest Dragon Exercises



2. Extend forward into right forward stance; left vertical punch to face, right hand guards along centerline.



3. Shift weight back into right back stance; right hand executes upper area block, left hand pulls back into fist in guard position in front of solar plexus.

4. Extend forward into right forward stance; left straight punch to solar plexus, right hand guards head, fingers pointing towards left.

Forest Dragon Exercises



5. Right foot steps to rear into left monkey stance; right hand drops down into lower knife hand block to shin, left hand pulls back into fist in guard position by right shoulder.

6. Pivot right into horse stance (E); left upset punch to ribs, right hand guards head, fingers pointing down and left.