

# **8<sup>th</sup> Dan Black Belt Thesis**

## **Training Program Highlights**

**Than-Phong International Martial Arts Federation**

Prepared by:

**Grandmaster Thuan Nguyen Truong**

President, Than-Phong  
International Martial Arts Federation

**Las Vegas, 23 February, 2012**

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Autobiography.....	2
Brief History of Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy.....	3
Than-Phong Achievements.....	3
Missions of Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy.....	4
Korean Masters at Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy.....	4
Than-Phong Training Program.....	4
Than-Phong Taekwondo Belts System.....	5
Seminars.....	5
Typical Class Activity.....	6
The Tenets of Taekwondo.....	6
The Student Oath.....	7
Samples of Black Belt Written Tests.....	7
History of Taekwondo.....	9
Taekwondo Today.....	9
Moral Culture of Taekwondo.....	11
The “Yin and Yang” Theory of Taekwondo.....	11
Breathing Method.....	12
Dan-Jun Breathing.....	12
Dan-Jun Breathing and Meditation.....	12
Dan-Jun Breathing and Martial Arts Techniques.....	13
Dan-Jun Breathing and Breaking.....	13
Dan-Jun Breathing and Free Sparring.....	14
Summary of Dan-Jun Breathing.....	14
Conclusion.....	14

## Autobiography

I was born into a traditional martial arts family. In my family, martial arts were taught to all men from generations to generations. According to the Truong's Genealogy, my ancestors came from Ha Tinh province, north of Viet Nam, and settled in My Khe, Quang Ngai province, central of Viet Nam, in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century. Several generations had served several Kingdoms of Viet Nam. My great-great-grandfather, Truong Dang Que, a descendant of the seventh-generation, served through three Nguyen Dynasties (Minh Mang, Thieu Tri and Tu Duc) with high rankings equivalent to the Prime Minister nowadays and also served as the King Tu Duc's teacher.

I am a descendant of the eleventh generation and the third child of a large family of nine children. My father began teaching the family traditional martial arts skills to his sons when they were 4 years of age. He told us, "Boys have to learn martial arts for self-defense and to help the community and the nation when needed." Besides going to school and helping around the house, the boys would practice martial arts faithfully every night. My two older brothers were extremely well trained. They would take turns to teach me when my father was busy. My father made a big banner and hung it in the middle of the family room with the words, "A healthy body begets a sharp mind." We grew up with the wisdom and infinite love of our parents and the everlasting support among our siblings.

When I was 10 years of age, a close friend of my father, Sifu Tran Bang Tuong, who had a Northern Shaolin Kungfu studio and the best Shaolin Kungfu Sifu locally, asked my father to give me permission to practice with him at his studio. My father was flattered and humbly agreed. Sifu Tran was very pleased with my progress and thus taught me various advanced techniques. I then relocated to larger cities to pursue my high school and college education and continued to practice martial arts regularly. In Saigon (capital of South Viet Nam), at the referral and recommendation of Sifu Tran, I joined one of the most famous Northern Shaolin schools in the Phu Nhuan District taught by one of the best Shaolin Kungfu at the time, Sifu Le Dai Hoan. Fortunately, Sifu Le recognized my skills and potentials early on and taught me a lot of his personal skills and trades and continually registered me to participate in local, regional and national tournaments. Sifu Le always reminded me to practice diligently to "win with glory but lose with honor." Under the outstanding guidance and exceptional teachings of Sifu Le, I won numerous tournaments and awards.

During my third year of college, as the Civil War situation in Viet Nam became dreadful, I felt responsible to serve my country and voluntarily joined the Viet Nam Air Force and became a Pilot Officer. During this time, I decided to enroll in Than-Phong Taekwondo Academy offered at the Air Force base hoping to learn a different style to enhance my martial arts skills. However, the more I practiced Taekwondo, the more I found many advantages in the methods of training, which were simple yet scientific. I began to research and study the philosophy of Taekwondo.

The philosophy of Taekwondo revolves around the teaching of Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Humility, Self-control, and Indomitable Spirit. I found it very similar to the teaching of Confucianism, which Viet Nam and my upbringing were heavily influenced by. My father and my Sifu's often reminded me: "Be proud but humble. Use martial arts only in self-defense, to control your actions and your mind, to help the weak, and to defend against injustice."

### **Brief History of Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy**

Late Air Force General Luu Kim Cuong founded Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy in 1966, and made it one of the priority programs of the Division of Air Force Training. Martial Arts, consisting of Taekwondo, Aikido, Judo, Jujitsu, and Shaolin Kungfu, were taught to Air Force Officers, personnel and their families. The Korean Armed Force had an important role in contributing and developing Than-Phong Taekwondo Academy from 1966 to 1973 during the time they based in South Viet Nam. The system of Than-Phong developed two civilian dojos: one located in the premises of the Civil Aviation of Tan Son Nhat Airport (1971), and the other in the 4th District of Saigon (1972). The number of Than-Phong practitioners amounted to several tens of thousands. In April 1975, when South Viet Nam fell to Communist, all Than-Phong studios had to close down and cease operations.

After April 1975, several Than-Phong Masters settled in the United States and the first Than-Phong studio was established in San Antonio, Texas. Eventually, a number of Than-Phong studios were set up in various cities nationwide, including Hayward, Orange County, San Jose, Santa Clara, Oakland, San Diego, Houston, Virginia, Michigan, Seattle, and Florida. In 1992, Than-Phong went international to Australia, France, Switzerland, and Canada. In 1994, the first Than-Phong school was established in Hanoi (North Viet Nam). In 2008, the Communist Regime in Viet Nam officially allowed Than-Phong to re-operate in Saigon. The Than-Phong system is now known as Than-Phong International Martial Arts Federation, of which I serve as President since 2009.

### **Than-Phong Achievements**

Under the dedicated guidance of many renowned Korean Masters, Than-Phong Taekwondo was widely known and quickly made a big name among all Vietnamese Taekwondo systems with many glorious victories in many individual and team competitions (Black Belt and Brown Belt). Than-Phong achievements included:

- 1969, 1970, 1971, and 1973 (no participation in 1972), at the Annual National Taekwondo Championship and the Annual Vietnam Armed Force Taekwondo Championship (alternately each year): four Grand Champions in the Team competitions, numerous gold medals in the

Individual competitions, and two National Champion Flags Awards awarded by the Korean Armed Force.

- 1971, at the Second SEA Games in Malaysia: gold medal in the Team competition, gold and silver medals in Individual Black Belt competitions, and bronze medal in Breaking.

### **Missions of Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy**

1. Before the fall of South Viet Nam, before April 1975: *“The mission of Than-Phong Academy was to build an elite team, well trained in all facets of physical and mental fitness, and moral education to uphold the spirit of ‘Brotherhood of solidarity to the service of the homeland.’”*
2. After the fall of South Viet Nam, after April 1975, Than-Phong practitioners were scattered all over the world. Some of the ex-Than-Phong instructors and I started to rebuild the system with a new mission statement: *“To provide the highest teaching quality by implementing and utilizing martial arts tradition, expertise, and the culmination of the knowledge of Than-Phong Grandmasters and Masters from around the world who value and train in traditional martial arts in order to bring the mind, the body, and the spirit together.”*

*The quality of Than-Phong schools and instructors comes from the inheritance, from generation to generation, of the excellent practice of traditional martial arts, which teaches proper self-defense and personal fitness, and instills in the student the maturity, discipline, balance and strength required to be a highly successful and strong person both in Taekwondo and in life.*

### **Korean Masters at Than-Phong Martial Arts Academy**

In 1966, President Pak Chung Hi of the Republic of Korea, assigned and sent Master Major Kang Dong Kil to Viet Nam to help develop Taekwondo in Viet Nam and support Than-Phong Academy in its early years. Many renowned Masters came from Korea to train Than-Phong disciples, including Masters Chung Tae Kap (Chief of Staff of the Korean Army in Viet Nam), Lieutenant Colonel Kim Bong Sik, Major Lee Sha Un, Captain Kim Byung Woon, Captain Cho Sun Taik, Sergeant Cho Hyung Ho, Sergeant Her Man, Sergeant Kang Ho, Sergeant Shu Jung Do, Sergeant Lee Keun Tae, and Kim (BatMan)...

### **Than-Phong Training Program**

Before 1982, Than-Phong Taekwondo followed the guidelines of the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) training program. From 1982 to 1995, Than-Phong started a dual-system training to include both World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) and ITF. However, the training

became increasingly difficult for young children to keep up so Than-Phong decided to modify its training program and applied it since 1996:

- Beginner to Red belt 2<sup>nd</sup> grade: Students practice WTF forms, techniques, and sparring.
- Black belt, Poom and Dan: Students practice both WTF and ITF forms (from Hwa-Rang and higher) and learn weapons Nunchaku, Bo, and Knife.

### **Than-Phong Taekwondo Belt System**

In the first two years of its inception (1966-1967), Than-Phong recruited mostly famous fighters, instructors, or high ranking students from different martial arts systems in order to quickly develop and implement the Than-Phong program. At that time, Than-Phong introduced a simple six-grade belt system which included White (beginner), Blue (5<sup>th</sup>), and Brown (4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup>). After the second class of instructors in 1968, Than-Phong introduced an eight-grade belt system: White (beginner), Yellow (7<sup>th</sup>), Green (6<sup>th</sup>), Blue (5<sup>th</sup>), and Brown (4<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup>). Since 1980, the Than-Phong system has changed to a ten-grade five colors and stripes belt system. Each color represents two grades: White (10<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>), Yellow (8<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>), Green (6<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>), Blue (4<sup>th</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>), and Red (2<sup>nd</sup> & 1<sup>st</sup>).

We design our own training curriculum for each level. Every three months of scheduled training, students will be allowed to test for the next level. All students will have to maintain his/her academic grade level higher than 70% and no “U” in conduct. A student can skip a level if his/her performance is exceptional at the belt test as well as maintaining excellent academic marks. Each student is required to know all the forms up to their grades. During their belt tests, students are to perform their grade level forms and draw and perform one lower belt form. They are also required to do five one-step basic techniques. Breaking and sparring start from the Yellow belt 8<sup>th</sup> grade and up. At the Red belt level, students are introduced to basic weapon movements for Bo and Nunchaku upon completing a basic weapon seminar. Red belt 1<sup>st</sup> grade students are required to train on schedule for six months before they can apply to test for Black belt. All Black belt tests follow WTF rules and regulations.

### **Seminars**

We teach seminars to prepare each Dan/Poom level before testing. For example:

- Black Belt Preparation Seminar for Red belt 1<sup>st</sup> grade
- Assistant Instructor Seminar for 1<sup>st</sup> Dan/Poom
- Instructor Seminar for 2<sup>nd</sup> Dan/Poom
- Director Seminar for 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan, 25 years of age or older
- Leadership Seminar for all Black belt from 15 years of age and older. This encompasses leadership value as well as judge and referee training.

Besides technical training, the Than-Phong system also includes the teaching of martial arts morals and philosophy. We start each class by reciting the Tenets and Student Oath followed by five minutes of meditation to review the students' daily activities. During this time, we ask the students to recognize both the good and the bad things that have happened. We believe that if a student is always aware of what he/she is doing, he/she will approach situations in a better manner.

For Red belt testing and higher, we require our students to answer questions about the Tenets of Taekwondo, the morals and philosophy of martial arts as well as the history of Taekwondo and of the history the Than-Phong system. Additionally, students must pass a physical endurance test. Students run the football field track for at least 0.5 mile nonstop for beginners and add on a two-lap increment with each grade. Running time requirements differ between children and adults.

### **Typical Class Activity: 1.5 Hours**

- Salutation and meditation (5 minutes): Recite the Tenets of Taekwondo and the Student Oath. Students sit down quietly in a meditation status.
- Warm-up Stretches (10 minutes): Stretch, sit-up, push-up, jumping jack, and punch.
- Warm-up Kicks (15 minutes): Kick bag, punch bag, jump rope, roll on mat.
- Basic Techniques (30 minutes): Practice forms required for each level.
- One-step, Semi-Sparring Techniques, Sparring (30 minutes):

### **The Tenets of Taekwondo**

여의 **Lễ Nghĩa**

**Courtesy:** To be thoughtful and considerate of others. Taekwondo students and instructors should be polite, and show consideration for others.

염치 **Liêm Sĩ**

**Integrity:** To be honest and good. Taekwondo practitioners should live by a code of moral values and principles.

인내 **Nhẫn Nại**

**Perseverance:** To never give up in the pursuit of one's goals. Students should welcome challenges, because challenges help them grow and improve.

겸손 **Khiêm Tốn**

**Humility:** a disposition to be humble; a lack of false pride.

## 극기 **Khắc Kỷ**

**Self-Control:** To have control of one's body and mind. A Taekwondo student should always control his actions and reactions.

## 백절불굴 **Tinh Thần Bất Khuất**

**Indomitable Spirit:** To have courage in the face of adversity. A Taekwondo student should never give up and always and highly maintain his/her spirit.

### **The Student Oath**

In addition to the five tenets, there are also five principals of Than-Phong Taekwondo in which we encourage the students to fully understand and follow both inside and outside of the class.

1. I shall be Loyal to my country.
2. I shall Observe the Tenets of Taekwondo.
3. I shall Respect my parents, masters, and seniors.
4. I shall Uphold the Martial Arts spirit and sportsmanship.
5. I shall Use Martial Arts for self-defense purpose only.

### **Samples of Black Belt Written Tests**

Following are samples of Questions and Answers we prepared for Dan/Poom written tests:

1. What are the 3 most important factors of Martial Arts?
  - Speed, Balance, and Accuracy.
2. How do you teach a beginner? Specifically, how do you plan for the first 3 months?
  - Pay more attention and spend more time with the slow learners.
  - Children: Need a lot of patience. Tone of voice must be soft but aggressive. Show and tell slowly. Make instructions easy to follow. Do not stay on one student too long. Always praise their achievements.
  - Adults: Respect, humble, sincere. Depending on who you are dealing with, do not go too fast or too slow. Praise and encourage often.
  - Weeks 1-2: Familiarize students with all different warm up exercises. Weeks 3-4: Teach basic stances (ready, forward, riding, block, punch on floor and bags). Weeks 5-8: Teach Saju and Kibon forms. Weeks 9-10: Teach 5 one-step techniques. Weeks 11-12: Review for the first testing.
3. How do you handle the class with multi-levels students?
  - Need help and assistance from other instructors and advanced students.



- General exercises: Give clear and specific instructions on “how to.” Teach slowly and in detail. Pay more attention to new students. Get help from advanced students.
  - Technical training: Keep practice continuous for all levels. Assign group leaders with clear direction. Teach each level enough to keep it going. Do not spend too much time on one student or a small group of students. Spend more time on weaker groups. Spend more time on preparation for students who are scheduled to test.
4. How do you describe the best technique?
    - The best technique is a technique being executed timely with power and accuracy.
  5. What are the qualities of a Taekwondo instructor?
    - Possess skills, knowledge, patience, and confidence. Be a leader and a role model. Be able to show and tell.
  6. What do you expect from practicing Taekwondo?
    - Physical fitness and mental discipline.
    - Prevent sickness, decrease chance of disease. Live a longer and healthier life.
    - Confidence, be able to walk the walk and talk the talk. Courage. Clear mind. Relieve stress.
  7. What are the differences between color belt and black belt in Taekwondo besides the color?
    - Color Belt is considered a novice level where students learn to lay a good foundation for advanced levels, physically and mentally.
    - Black Belt, technically, is considered as a beginner in the Taekwondo world. However, a Black Belt holder is a leader, a role model, and a teacher.
  8. What are your commitments as a Black Belt holder?
    - Stand for a better cause throughout life.
    - Finish what you start.
    - Practice the Tenets of Taekwondo daily and in any circumstance.
  9. What can Than-Phong expect from you as a student and as a Black Belt holder?
    - Be a leader. Be a role model.
    - Put extra effort in anything you do.
    - Maintain good grades in school. Be always well disciplined.
  10. The application of forms in Martial Arts:
    - A form includes all the basic techniques for sparring that are put together so they can be easily remembered and more interesting to practice. Most of the moves are meaningful and some moves are just a link between one technique to another.

- Practicing forms makes one aware of the direction and balance as well as improves power and endurance.

11. What are the advantages and disadvantages between low stance and high stance?

- Low stance: More balanced because the center of gravity is close to the ground. It also makes the legs and feet stronger. However, it is hard to move quickly.
- High stance: Easier to move around; therefore, it is useful during sparring for executing techniques or dodging away from opponents attacks. Contrary to a low stance, the balance with a high stance is very vulnerable.

12. Than-Phong Logo, Uniform, Patch, and Belt System

- Uniform: white V-neck uniform for all students from beginner to 2<sup>nd</sup> Kup Red Belt. Red Belt students have an option to wear a Red trim around the V-neck. All Black Belt students up to 6<sup>th</sup> Dan wear a Black trim V-neck uniform. Uniforms for students of 7<sup>th</sup> Dan and higher include three 6-inch vertical black stripes on both sides of the shoulders and pants.
- All uniforms must have WTF Logo on the left of the chest and Than-Phong Yin Yang Logo on the right. On the back is the Than-Phong Patch.
- Belts system: 10 Kup to 9<sup>th</sup> Dan
  - Color Belts: from 10<sup>th</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> with 5 colors: White, Yellow, Green, Blue, and Red.
  - Black Belts from 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> Dan are represented by the appropriate gold stripes.

## **Seminars Materials**

Following are the main sections of the materials we use to teach in the seminars:

### ***History of Taekwondo***

Early Koreans developed unique martial arts forms for unarmed self-defense to complement their skills with weapons. The first recorded evidence of what was to become modern Taekwondo is found about two thousand years ago in Korean history. A mural painting from the Koguryu kingdom (37 B.C. to 66 A.D.) was found in a tomb believed to have been built sometime during the period 3 to 427 A.D. This mural depicts figures practicing martial arts techniques. Historical records from this Koguryu period also mention the practice of martial arts techniques and tournaments. The early forms had different names, such as Kwonbak, Bakhi, Dangsoo, Taesoo and Kongsoo...

From about 600 A.D. to about 1400, the mainstream dominant form was Soobak, which further evolved into Taekyon beginning in the late 1300s. Taekyon was the dominant Korean martial arts form until the Japanese invasion and occupation of Korea in 1909. From 1909 to 1945, the

Japanese suppressed Korean culture and martial arts, and introduced the Japanese culture and martial arts.

The modern period of Taekwondo began with the defeat of the Japanese and the liberation of Korea in 1945. Korean martial arts Masters wanted to eliminate Japanese influences. They began discussions on how to return to the traditional Taekyon based Korean martial arts and on how to unite the various martial arts schools (or Kwans) and styles into a single style and national sport. After several years of discussions, the name Taekwondo was chosen in April 1955 by the board of Masters of the various Kwans, and the kwans started to unify through the late 1950s.

### *Taekwondo Today*

The spread of Taekwondo as a martial art and competitive sport continues to this date. Today, Taekwondo is by far the most widely practiced martial art in the world. Especially, after it was selected as a full Olympic sport for the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia.

The literal and superficial translation of Taekwondo is "the art (Do) of kicking (Tae) and punching (Kwon). In the Korean language, "Do" implies the philosophical approach to a way of life, a pathway to achieve enlightenment. The students of Taekwondo, through rigorous physical training, intend to improve themselves physically, mentally, and spiritually.

At the center of this philosophy, is the concept of interaction between opposing forces in nature (Ying vs. Yang). Equilibrium is only achieved when contrary forces are distributed in equal amounts, resulting in balance and harmony. When only one force dominates, however, the result is imbalance, which could mean discord or failure.

In today's society, there are relatively fewer chances to encounter a life-threatening situation than when Taekwondo was first developed. Therefore, it is the spiritual part of Taekwondo that motivate people to become its practitioners. Some people practice Taekwondo simply for the fitness or because they want to train and excel in a sport. However, a true Taekwondo practitioner should never forget the importance of the philosophical, spiritual, and physical aspects of Taekwondo to truly experience all of its benefits.

Taekwondo is a scientific use of the body in methods of self-defense. It develops the body into its ultimate use of its facilities through intensive physical and mental training. Taekwondo with its discipline, techniques, and mental training are the mortar for building a strong sense of justice, fortitude, humility, and resolve. It is this mental conditioning that makes a true practitioner of martial arts. Taekwondo also teaches the importance of responsibility and honesty as the means to achieve harmony with society. A true Taekwondo student is the one who knows

how to behave in any place and at any time and is trustworthy and sincere. This is the insignia for which people would recognize the Taekwondo practitioner.

There are many people who begin to study Taekwondo or other martial arts in order to learn self-defense. Many parents bring their children to the dojo seeking help to better the child's discipline and focus. Children would benefit from Taekwondo as it helps them stay focused in school, think quickly, get better grades and develop self-discipline and self-control. But Taekwondo is a lot more than just that. Taekwondo practitioners have to memorize and live with its Tenets and to understand the philosophy behind it to become a better person, better life style. Respect, Humility, Integrity, and Self-control are the genuine qualities that all Taekwondo students must possess. Although practicing Taekwondo elevates one's self-confidence, one should not convey the false sense of superiority. On the contrary, all Taekwondo practitioners should be humble and considerate and observe the highest regard for morality and ethics.

The utmost purpose of Taekwondo is to eliminate fighting by discouraging the oppression of the stronger over the weaker with a power that must be based on humanity, justice, morality, wisdom and faith, thus helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

The following philosophy and guidelines are the cornerstone of Taekwondo that all serious students of this art are encouraged to live by.

1. Be willing to go where the going may be tough and do the things that are worth doing even though they are difficult.
2. Be gentle to the weak and tough to the strong.
3. Be content with what you have in money and position but never in skills.
4. Always finish what you begin, be it large or small.
5. Be a willing teacher to anyone regardless of religion, race or ideology.
6. Never yield to repression or threat in the pursuit of a noble cause.
7. Teach attitude and skill with action rather than words.
8. Always be yourself even though your circumstances may change.
9. Be the eternal teacher who teaches with the body when young, with words when old, and by moral precept even after death.

### ***Moral Culture of Taekwondo***

The mental education of Taekwondo is aimed at enriching the noble character of each student and at promoting good and healthy sportsmanship.

### ***The "Yin and Yang" Theory of Taekwondo***

At the center of this philosophy is the concept of interaction between opposing forces in nature (Yin versus Yang). Equilibrium is only achieved when opposing forces are distributed in equal amounts, resulting in balance and harmony. When only one force dominates, however, the result is imbalance, which could mean discord or failure. Under this concept, health is one consequence

of the balance between the “Yin” and “Yang,” energy forces that rule the world. An imbalance between these two forces can result in illness. According to Taoism, the force of Yin and Yang is the harmony between heaven and earth. The day (Yang) is followed by night (Yin) in perpetuity. Similarly, a person has a body (Yang) and a mind (Yin). The front side of the body is Yin whereas the backside is Yang. Yin and Yang represent the dualism of the universe and can be seen as opposite ends of mutually complementary and interacting systems. Yin represents the passive or negative female force (i.e., moon, earth, water, poverty, sadness) that produces cold, darkness, and emptiness. Yang is the active male force (i.e., sun, heaven, fire, goodness, wealth) and is reflected in warmth, light, and fullness. To be healthy, the individual must seek to balance the force of Yin and Yang.

Taekwondo builds on this “Yin and Yang” philosophy. Taekwondo training concentrates on physical, mental, and spiritual balancing of left and right, hardness and softness, strength and weakness. Taekwondo is a complete sport that trains an individual to be physically, mentally, and spiritually fit.

### ***Breathing Method***

Most people only use the top portion of their lung while breathing. They fail to fill the bottom as well as the top portion of their lung. When you inhale, imagine the air fills your entire abdomen with energy while concentrating on your Dan-Jun. When you exhale, imagine this energy travels through your body while the air is being released through your nose.

### ***Dan-Jun Breathing***

Breathing is an essential and fundamental factor in Martial Arts. It has been used to develop internal power (Ki), self-confidence, concentration, and good health, which in itself lead to a fruitful longevity.

Dan-Jun in Korean means “Red Field,” “Hot Point,” or “Center of Energy.” It is pronounced “Tandem” in Japanese, “Dan Dien” in Vietnamese, and “Tantien” in Chinese. It refers to an area located two inches below the navel. This area is the center of gravity of the human body and, at the same time, the seat of “Ki” (internal power of vital energy). Dan-Jun breathing is an important martial arts exercise for the development of “Ki” that is used primarily for Meditation and for the Execution of Martial Arts Techniques.

### ***Dan-Jun Breathing and Meditation***

There are many different breathing formulas while meditating. Inhaling and exhaling in all the formulas should be executed slowly. Some of the breathing formulas include:

1. Inhale for 5 seconds and exhale for 5 seconds
2. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 5 seconds, and exhale for 5 seconds
3. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, and hold 5 seconds
4. Inhale for 5 seconds, hold 10 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds, and hold 5 seconds
5. Inhale for 10 seconds, hold 15 seconds, exhale for 10 seconds, etc.

The length of time you inhale, hold, and exhale can be gradually increased to the point that you can remain idle for one minute or even longer. Choose one of the above breathing formulas and practice it while meditating or performing Tai-Chi Chuan. As a result, you will increase your “Ki” and attain spiritual unification.

### ***Dan-Jun Breathing and Martial Arts Techniques***

Another method of practicing Dan-Jun breathing consists of inhaling and, while holding the air in, forces it down to your Dan-Jun. Now, feel the energy stored in your Dan-Jun travelling to your muscles, giving you a significant and intrinsic power. While you force the air down to your Dan-Jun, you may exhale very slowly (tongue touches your upper teeth slightly). Do not tighten your face as this might cause dizziness. This method allows you to concentrate or focus your “Ki” on the part of the body that is used in the breathing technique.

Similarly, Dan-Jun breathing can be used while practicing Taekwondo forms. When a block or a strike is executed, it should be done while the air inhaled is forced down instantly to the Dan-Jun. Now, imagine the power generated in the Dan-Jun and transferred to your hands or feet. After the technique has been executed with real power, exhale while relaxing your body. You can feel rhythmical movement at the very moment you execute the technique.

Kihap is another kind of Dan-Jun breathing. Kihap is a scream you make without tightening your DanJun. You should feel the air coming out slowly from your abdomen when you make Kihap.

As mentioned above, Dan-Jun is the center of gravity of a human body. Concentrating on the Dan-Jun after inhaling means adding weight to the center of gravity of your body. The heavier this center of gravity is, the more stable your body is. Therefore, you can perform Taekwondo, kicking, punching, or any kinds of physical activities.

### ***Dan-Jun Breathing and Breaking***

Before executing any types of breaking technique, you should concentrate on Dan-Jun breathing. If executed correctly, you should be able to visualize the power generated at the Dan-Jun and transfer this power to your hand or foot, whichever you use in your breaking. This is a critical

moment, the moment of visualization that the breaking technique is successfully executed. Your hand or foot should be very tight only at the moment your hand or foot makes contact with the target. If your arm and hand is tight at the beginning of the execution or before you make contact with the target, you will not be able to obtain maximum speed because your muscle is too tense. When a muscle is too tense, there is no fluid motion.

### ***Dan-Jun Breathing and Free Sparring***

Any attack you try to execute must take place while you inhale, concentrate the air in your Dan-Jun, and have the maximum amount of “Ki” ready for use. If possible, attack your opponent while he/she is exhaling, when his/her “Ki” is temporarily drained out. It is at this point that your opponent is more vulnerable.

### ***Summary of Dan-Jun Breathing***

In general, Dan-Jun breathing can be used in many situations. For example, when you are nervous or under stress, Dan-Jun breathing can help you remain calm; therefore, you can recover your serenity and think more clearly. Practice of Dan-Jun breathing daily will result in better confidence, better concentration, and better health.

The importance of Dan-Jun breathing cannot be over emphasized in the training program of a martial artist. It takes constant practice to be able to do it automatically. It unlocks a tremendous potential by the release of the internal force or vital energy centered on the Dan-Jun. Through proper breathing, one attains self-confidence, good health, and spiritual unification, which is the ultimate goal of a true martial artist and the universal desire of all human beings.

### **Conclusion**

The question a lot of people generally ask is “what is the best martial arts style?”

The martial arts knowledge is unlimited as an immense ocean. Each style has its own advantages and disadvantages. The best martial art style is the one that you master. In honesty, no martial artists should ever say that he or she has mastered the style that he or she has practiced.

Taekwondo is simple to learn and simple to teach since it is both physical and scientific. But to achieve the beauty of the art, one should dedicate a lot of time to study and practice. More importantly, the true Taekwondo martial artist is the one who always lives his life within the boundaries of Courtesy, Integrity, Perseverance, Humility, Self control, and Indomitable Spirit. They are the key factors to world harmony.