

Footwork exercises for Development of Balance and Control. Magic Square stepping by the 'Lo' number square.

ABSTRACT.

Classable as a Chi-Kung energy accelerating exercise, this is an intense and quickly done form. Stepping twice or more around the circle of numbers, takes far less than a minute. Hence it can generate internal power quickly, which may lead to wrong use. Some care is therefore needed to apply the concepts in this article. The references section expands this articles outline further. A video is included to show 'How it Works'.

Introduction.

To help with developing good perception into the 'Lo' Square Stepping techniques outlined here, a brief outline in three paragraphs follows.

'Yu the Great'

This whole article on stepping methods relates back to one of the originators of Chinese Taoism. The Steps/Pace of 'Yu the Great' [*](#) . He designed a progression of dance/stepping through the Big Dipper stars and their surrounding constellations. Taken as symbolizing the bodies three Cinnabar Fields [*](#) ;

the upper bone cavity ni-huan and the guiding Pole star,

with the middle (Heart/Purple Palace & Lung/Flowery Covering/Umbrella) bone cavity

and lower (Tan Tien) bone cavity.

With uprightness of body and mind as the aimed for fruit. Based on stepping through the star patterns using a short/half step and a long/completed step, which is alternated on either side. The short steps taken are as a limp, in a short half step, then with the other foot a long step, and the short limp stepping further to catch-up. [<More on this later>](#)

Pa-Kua basin stepping [*](#).

Pa-Kua basin stepping, which has three regular types of forward stepping in its small, medium and large basin steps.

The 'Basin Stepping' method has big similarities to the techniques found in 'Magic Square' stepping, which are in a set piece 'form'. Whereas the Pa-Kua method is done freeform around the Pa-Kua circle drawn on the floor. This involves changes of direction using Circle-Walking, Toe-In -- Toe-Out and White-Ape circling. By comparison, the I-Ching Magic square sequence when used for stepping practise, reveals all of these in its unique anomalous order.

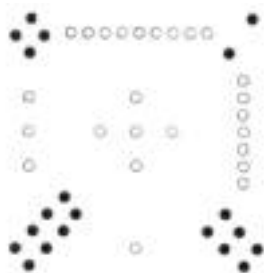
The 'Lo' writing - a Magic Number Square.

The I-Ching book [*](#), relates how in ancient times the full 64 hexagrams were discovered. The term magic square refers to the Lo writing. "The Ho (He Tu)

gave the scheme or map, and the Lo gave the writing, of (both of) which the sages took advantage. A dragon-horse issued from the Yellow River, bearing on its back an arrangement of marks, from which Fû-hsî got the idea of the 8 trigrams”.

The Lo writing

The Lo numbers *



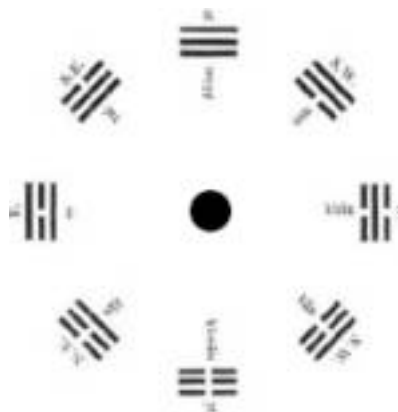
4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

Magic Square stepping techniques.

So, what is needed is a representation of the 'Magic Square', in a circular form, this enables the three lengths of short, medium and long stepping to become usable in continuous steps. If we overlay the square of numbers onto this next illustrated circle,

The pre-heaven (Yuan-Chi) Pa-Kua of Fu-Hsi, as illustrated in the I-Ching *

then we have a start off template, that will serve to make a circle that can fit on your floor somewhere. At home, at work, in a hall or public place.



A good idea is to get a clear tough plastic floor mat, such as is used in offices at work desks. This would normally have an office chair rolling on it, stopping carpet wear from chair rollers and feet.

They have small spikes underneath which stops slippage on office carpets, this is a good feature for our uses as a stepping mat, to stop it sliding due to the turning forces used in the Lo map circle stepping. <These see-through plastic mats are generally around 1.2 metres square>.

Painting small circles (with black enamel) in these nine positions on the mat, makes a permanent mark that doesn't come off easily. Now the spacing for these needs some calculation. Based on your height and step length and also the between central circle and edge marks and edge to edge marks.

Its probably best to use a concrete area with chalk firstly, before transferring the final pattern onto the mat.

The 'Step of Yu' was unusual because of his limping step. We will use this as a method to get the basic measurement of our stepping. A limping leg is too weak to support the full body weight, so the compromise is to 'hold back', on the good leg, which supports the upright body comfortably. To find the unknown length of step, we start off standing upright, then extending one (weaker/limping) leg without bending forward, place it as far as it will go forward on the floor. Bend the standing (good) leg slightly, to extend the other (limping) leg an inch or so further. Measure this distance – from the ball of foot where it was, to the ball of

foot where it has extended too. This becomes the separating distance throughout the whole circles 9 marks. The 'Lo' map (No.5) center point, is then marked in a large dot with the chalk. Then through this and either side, draw a large cross, as North/South and East/West. Then add the sub-directions cross lines for S.E to N.W and N.E to S.W. The measure you got from your (limp) step test, is then applied through the center to the 8 directional points, juggling the final positions for evenness between each point according to the standard (limp) step measure. For instance the gap between each should be walkable with this short (limp) step, that you used earlier.

That is; clockwise or anticlockwise, point to next point, around the circle and crossing the center.

Try stepping between positions 2 to 3, then try between 7, 8 and 9, to see the middle basin step length.

Then try the 1 and 9, 2 and 8, 3 and 7, 4 and 6 steps, these represent the long basin step, done using a bow-stance or mountain-climbing step.

Adjust these until you have the basic series of 9, with equal circle spacing and you are able to use it as a working model. You will now know just how big a diameter mat to buy, to be bigger than your biggest steps. Then you could proceed to use the measurements to mark out the mat.

When the paint is dry, you can begin using the order of stepping 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 as shown on the magic square. Accentuating walking with swinging arms is a good way to discover how to use them for control & balance of this highly adaptive form. So your arms are swingable to help control steps, if applied directionally, you will soon work out the yes and no arm movements, to make the sequence work as smooth as possible. Enlivening full body movement is one of the awakening energies here. Maintenance of uprightness in adaptive movement is another.

1st set of 9, 2nd set of 9, 3rd set of 9, 4th set of 9..... (odd numbered sets and even numbered sets of 9 steps)

Note that on completion of the first set of 9, the even series starts, reversing the foot used on each position, both in stepping and the direction of spinning. Then when the odd numbered series returns (in the 3rd set), the original step and spinning directions as used in the 1st series, is used again.

Now, about spinning; a foot landing on a position triggers the other foot and the whole body to start a spin inward.

So, in the case of a right foot landing on a mark, then the left and the whole body starts to spin around the right foot and across toward the right-side - clockwise. On the ball of the right foot, swivel the body toward the direction of the next number, then extend the left foot onto it. The reverse then ensues as an anticlockwise spin, in a continuous cycle. Four sets of 9 is enough to have completed the exercise, but just two will do. Doing this daily in the morning will soon establish the correct energies.

NOTE: The central number '5' is always simply stepped-on, with no spin added, just a straight forward step. There is no law attached to this and you can add the extra spin if you want. This serves as a rest/break at the symbol of the Pole position, or half way (the center of the series) in all these sequences.

This is an intense and quickly done form, when fully learned and working correctly, twice or more around the circle takes far less than a minute . To get more from the form at exercise time, see the section later about reversing positions, [using other magic square numbers](#).

Here then is the learning curve;

- a. Learn the order of steps in the first (**odd** numbered cycle) until it is retained easily in memory.
- b. Make the steps to each position.
- c. Insufficient energy applied to the steps and the following spin will cause breaking of the continuum.
- d. Excess energy applied will force errors.
- e. Finding the balanced speed and positioning makes success.
- f. As the second (**even** numbered cycle) begins, learn to do it all in reverse, your No.1 position leading foot starts on the opposite foot than before.
- g. The ideal step timing is around one to two seconds or so, this is adjustable to your ability, but should be regular, as this is a set (known) form. As an advanced practiser, it could for instance be done, in a quick-continuous burst of energy, exercising to the limit these newly learned abilities.

After some time practising and having the whole double cycle in a good working order, some after thought is needed about the use of the Pole Star/The Tai Chi in this exercise. While Capture and Subjugation of wayward energies that stopped practise of the magic circle stepping is learnable, the fact is, returning to the source is the best 'Home' ground. Recognition of the spirit, its peace, patience, mindfulness and other untold virtues are what life is all about. Misuse of this energy is evident in those who never learned the internal energies accelerated by this kind of functional exercises, which to unawakened people is the norm. Hence there is wayward energy known as Piglet-Chi, a resource of non-discerning, non-controlling, non-balancing forces. Or the opposite of all that has been learned by this kind of stepping practise. These mimic the continuousness of movement, applying themselves as if discerning, controlling and balancing, whereas the true energies serve by 'thinking before they leap', 'answer with controlling thought and function', 'seek the center as balance'. This is one of the reasons the internal Chi-Kung Tai Chi form is done slowly for the most part, to give the self space and time, releasing the 'old you' and allowing newly discovered paths to be created in thought and deed. With the chief moral guide being the Pole Star, pointed to by the Big Dipper, the assemblage of virtuous energies that serve the Pole.

The 'Lo' map (Magic Square) stepping guide - VIDEO

See our illustrative short video of the 1st and 2nd set of 9 steps, ending half way through the 3rd set. Go to the webpage: [MP4 VIDEO](#).

Viewable on Desktops, Notepads and Smartphones.

● **Having become aware of the odd and even cycles and how the cycles function – reverse them for more complete development.**

The mirror image progression of stepping, or;

What was	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Becomes	1	4	7	2	5	8	3	6	9

This series in 2 sets can follow on directly after completing the original first 2 sets. Making 4 unique revolutions total !

Benefits become evident in the propriety of thought and deed achieved from learning this advanced series.

More detailed exposition.

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With uprightness of body and mind as the aimed for fruit.

Based on stepping through drawn star patterns using a short/half step and a long/complete step, alternated on either side. So the steps taken are; as a limp, in a short half step, then with the other foot a long step, then the short limp step, steps further to catch-up. Next the long step foot is used to take a limp like short half step, with the other foot taking a long full step, then the short limp step, steps further to again catch-up. Progress is continued in this way through the dance/stepping of the 'Pace of Yu' as each level of 'the Three Terraces', 'the Dark Stars' and 'the Big Dipper' are stepped through.

Non-Achievement and Achievement.

Initially on beginning any new venture we find ourselves as ignorant/deluded <pali: moha> as to the right way to complete the task at hand. Unless there are obvious reasons to not embark, it is most likely we have something to say about the subject, based on our wrongly perceived knowing. As such it is classed a delusion, with any action found to be incompetent and clumsy, having no lightness and adaptability of spirit, instead guided by a craving 'to achieve' <pali: lobha>, but without the required know how or order of deeds, instead making errors. We find the self 'shelled out' as it were in the appearance of a hard covering, both in the mind and physically. Except we take a more serious look, these imaginary <mirage, pali: marichi> conclusions would remain, as if they were the final brick in a wall.

This has an I-Ching hexagram that illustrates the position, in Hexagram 64 Wei Chi, known in English as simply 'Before Completion'. Looking this up in this book (The Yi-Ching *) we find its single line structure to be ☵ that is from the bottom,

alternating with a Yin then a Yang line structure, right up to the topmost 6th line. So, not having entered a stream of learning, both in physical and mental terms, we have not crossed the stream as it were, to the 'Other Side'.

The 'Other Side' also has a hexagram that represents its position. Hexagram 63 Chi Ch'i or 'Completion'. Obviously this has the deep meaning of having gone over the stream of learning until a state of never forgetting, as if by 'second nature' the item under scrutiny and seriously applied learning reaches 'the Other Side' or 'Achievement' status. Going just a little further we find the like symbology in the natural elements used in these 2 hexagrams. They both show 'Water' and 'Fire' in their 3 line structures, but hexagram 64 'Before Completion' has Fire above Water, whereas the other has Fire under Water in their bottom to top structure. If Fire is placed under Water, it becomes steam & rises up as purified water, to be dispersed in the sky/heavens. But this is not so with the former case (hexagram 64 Wei Chi), with the Fire being on top, so no dispersion is possible. The Water trapped below cannot ascend, purify itself of its dilutions and achieve as it were purity in heaven. The symbology here should be obvious, when applied to our learning circle/subject matter. Else wise all effort would continue, as an ever densified/thickening/covering, like the unpurified waters of the sea.

NOTE: The steps used in the 'Pace of Yu' are done in similar fashion to these 2x above hexagrams, using the double/short step (yin line) or single/long step (yang line). Thus fulfilling the 6 line Yin and Yang structures outlined by hexagrams 63 and 64. Of course the steps would be done from either the 'before' or 'after' completion position, dependant on achievement or not.

Footwork exercises for development of balance and control by the quickened spirit.

Having learned the wayward intentions <unwholesomeness, pali: akusala> of the (freely available & multiplying) worldly mind and its tainted directions of delusion, craving, illwill <pali: moha, lobha, dosa>. The choice toward balance, control and the separation to the spirit becomes classed as viable (freely available & multiplying), these paths offering the choice leading to the conclusions found towards mortality and immortality.

REFERENCES.

1. Taoist Meditation: The Mao-shan Tradition of Great Purity. Author: Robinet, Isabelle. ISBN13: 9780791413609
2. The I-Ching (Yi-King). English translation by James Legge. (PDF file) <http://ornasonova.com/I-Ching.php>
3. The Masters Manual of Pa Kua Chang. By Jerry Alan Johnson. ISBN: 096995006
4. Tai Chi Chuan of Yang Chen Fu. Information and Form. <http://ornasonova.com/TaiChi.php>

Le Labyrinthe des Indiens du Sud-Ouest americain. (in French) Raymond Christinger

Some Buddhist Pali names are referred to throughout this text as clarifiers of the meanings of some English words.

Buddhist Dictionary, A Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines.. Author: Venerable Nyanatiloka. ISBN: 9552400198

(# webpage searches will find all of these books, PDF files, and other word references)
The term 'Magic Square' is a modern concept, as the numbers total 15 whichever way/direction they are added together.

The inserted illustrative diagrams & tables in this article are from the [I-Ching book](#).

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