

# A brief introduction to the Refined Form

Paul Fretter , January 2022

This brief introduction puts the Refined Form into context, within our system.

## Why was the Refined Form created?

The Short Form represents the distilled knowledge of previous generations of teachers and is the foundation of our system. According to my teacher (Wee Kee Jin) the **Simplified, Refined Form** was created by his teacher Huang Sheng Shyan, to incorporate his own specific, evolved understanding into the system without materially altering the Short Form or the Long Form. For brevity, the Simplified, Refined Form is known as the **Refined Form**.

*Note: The Short Form is a shortened version of the original (teacher Yang Cheng Fu) Taiji Form, commonly known as the “Long Form” or “108 Form”, wherein the methods of movement, timing and loading/releasing are identical. Some movements from the Long Form were omitted in the creation of the Short Form (by teacher Cheng Man Ching), and the number of repetitions reduced. For brevity in this article, please assume that when referring to the Short Form it also implies the Long Form.*

To ensure the original foundations in the Short Form are conserved, and out of respect for his teachers, teacher Huang created the separate **Refined Form**. The art can therefore be transmitted faithfully and completely to students, first with the conserved Short Form understanding, followed by the Refined Form as a progression.

## What is different about the Refined Form?

The Refined Form is similar in length to the Short Form, albeit with a difference sequence, and it includes the movements of the Long Form which were omitted from the Short Form, such as: Needles at the Bottom of the Sea, Fan Through the Back, Parting the Horse’s Mane and others.

In the Short Form there are two different types of releasing practiced, depending on the movement: a) release by loading and borrowing, and b) release by sinking. In the Refined Form, all the releases are by sinking only.

Most of the individual movements look similar to those in the Short Form, and the names are the same, but the timing is subtly different. The Refined Form introduces overlapping timing where the disruption of the (imaginary) opponent’s base and the releasing happen simultaneously. The concomitant partner practice is the *Receiving Force* exercise(s).

## When to learn the Refined Form?

Before attempting to learn the Refined Form, it is important to already be very clear on the choreography and the accuracy of movement of the Short Form, and to understand the process of loading and releasing. The latter point is important because it needs to be seen in contrast to the method of releasing in the Refined Form. However, it is not essential that you can already uproot someone in partner work. Provided you are comfortable with the Short Form, it is not essential to learn the Long Form before learning the Refined Form.

It is important to keep your practice of the Short Form clearly separate from practicing the Refined Form, so that you avoid getting confused.

### Will learning the Refined Form affect my Short Form practice?

The short answer is a qualified “yes”. By focussing on sinking in the Refined Form, it will increase your skill and awareness of its importance and lead you to study it deeper in the Short/Long Forms.

Mostly, when I teach the Refined Form, it is in reference to the Short Form. By this I mean that I assume the student already knows how to perform a particular movement in the Short Form and then I describe the difference. It is therefore also likely that you will discover gaps in your knowledge of the Short Form and enthuse you to update your Short Form practice accordingly. Of course, the few movements which are entirely “new”, i.e. those not present in the Short Form, are taught in further detail.

From my own experience, learning the Refined Form really helped me to refine my practice and understanding of the Short Form, by seeing it from a slightly different perspective. Gradually it began to influence my partner training, complementing and refining what I had learned in the Short Form by enabling me to adapt to a wider variety of situations and timings.

### After learning the Refined Form, should I stop practicing the Short Form?

No, the Refined Form complements the Short Form but does not replace it. Even when you have developed an ability with the overlapping timing and the *receiving force*, you must continue to practice and improve the skill of loading and releasing by borrowing. In free partner training, sparring and fighting, you will need to use the most appropriate method according to the situation and therefore you will benefit from the understanding of both forms in your repertoire. Practicing the Refined Form without the Short Form would be like eating a pizza topping without the pizza base!

To gain the maximum benefit, it is best if you can dedicate additional practice time so that you can train the Refined Form whilst continuing to develop your understanding of the Short Form. There is a similar increase in workload for the partner training.

### Should I modify my Short Form timing to be like the Refined Form?

No, this is not recommended, as you risk losing some of the methods in the Short Form that you will still need to practice and refine, so keep it like it is and deepen your understanding of the load and release timing. Also, if you teach a class, it is very important that the Short Form is taught first, to give students a firm foundation capable of adapting to the movements of the Refined Form later, should they so desire.

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<https://taiji.org.uk>

**Footnote:** For a detailed explanation of the various Taiji classics, please consult the following books:

Tàijíquán Wúwéi – a Natural Process . By Wee Kee Jin, Published in 2003

Tàijíquán - True to the Art . By Wee Kee Jin, Published in 2011

Both are available from Wee Kee Jin at <http://www.taijisoce.com>