



Guelph Tai Chi for Health  
Linda J. Kearns, Instructor

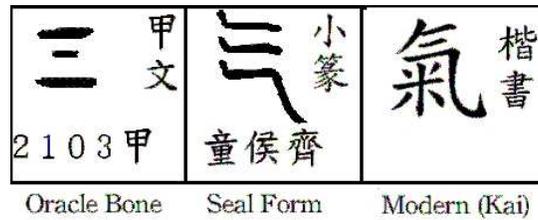
## What is "chi" or "qi"

Definitions from sources on the Internet:

- The Chinese term for vital energy or life force. "Q" is pronounced "chee."
- In Traditional Chinese Medicine, *Qi* is believed to be the essence that gives the world, and the individual body, life. *Qi* moves blood through the body and energizes the organs. This energy is derived partly from our genetic make-up, partly from our breathing, and partly from the food we eat.
- (pronounced "Chee" as in cheese), does not translate well, into one English word. Chinese thought does not distinguish between matter and energy, but *Qi* is considered matter on the verge of becoming energy, or energy at the point of materializing. In Traditional Chinese Medicine theory, it is often referred to as the "energy" present in the Meridians and the organs of the body....
- *Qi* is our vital life energy. This life energy flows through a network of meridians or pathways in our body. *Qi* unites all parts of the body into a single, integrated whole. In a healthy body *Qi* flows smoothly, disease develops when there is an imbalance or disruption to the flow of *Qi*.
- in Eastern philosophies, the energy that connects and animates everything in the universe; includes both individual *Qi* (personal life force) and universal *Qi*, which are coextensive through the practice of mind-body disciplines, such as traditional meditation, aikido, and tai chi.
- *Qi* is a fundamental concept of everyday Chinese culture, most often defined as "air" or "breath" (for example, the colloquial Mandarin Chinese term for "weather" is *tiān Qi*, or the "breath of heaven") and, by extension, "life force" or "spiritual energy" that is part of everything that exists.

A large, bold, black Chinese character representing the concept of Qi (氣).

Exercise: Read more about "Q" and add your own thought(s) about it:



The traditional Chinese character for *Qi* consists of two parts: the upper conveying the idea of steam rising, and the lower is a pot of rice cooking. So we have solid, liquid and gas; we have heat and energy, we have transformation, we have basic nourishment.

The earliest way of writing *Qi* consisted of three wavy lines, used to represent one's breath seen on a cold day.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine *Qi* circulates through channels in the body called meridians. Symptoms of various illnesses are often believed to be the product of disrupted, blocked, or unbalanced *Qi* movement (interrupted flow) through the body's meridians, as well as deficiencies or imbalances of *Qi* (homeostatic imbalance) in the various Zang Fu organs<sup>1</sup>. Traditional Chinese medicine often seeks to relieve these imbalances by adjusting the circulation of *Qi* (metabolic energy flow) in the body using a variety of therapeutic techniques. Some of these techniques include herbal medicines, special diets, physical training regimens (*Qigong*, Tai Chi Chuan, and martial arts training), moxibustion, massage to clear blockages, and acupuncture, which uses small diameter metal needles inserted into the skin and underlying tissues to reroute or balance *Qi*.

**Additional reading:**

- Most of the above is based on the Wikipedia article on "*Qi*". To read the whole article: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qi>
- Other resources:
  - Chuckrow, Robert. The Tai Chi Book: Refining and Enjoying a Lifetime of Practice. Boston : YMAA Publication Center, 1998.
  - Jarmey, Chris. The Theory and Practice of Taiji Qigong. North Atlantic Books, 2005.
  - MacRitchie, James. Chi Kung: Cultivating Personal Energy. Dorset : Element, 1993.
  - Page, Michael. The Power of Ch'I: An Introduction to Chinese Mysticism and Philosophy. London : Aquarian Press, 1988.

Rev. September 08

---

<sup>1</sup> *Zang Fu* organs: *Zang* - yin organs - heart, liver, spleen, lung, kidney, pericardium; *Fu* - yang organs - small intestine, large intestine, gall bladder, urinary bladder, stomach and san jiao ("Triple burner" - no parallel in western medicine, but linked with the lymphatic system.)