

The Legs

The legs sit underneath and on the outside of the hips, so if we stand in Bear Stance the feet are hip width or shoulder width apart with the knees pointing in the direction of the toes. Ladies may find it best to refer to their hips and Gents to their shoulders, but we have to check in a mirror occasionally to make sure we are not over or underestimating the size of our hips or shoulders.

To stand on one leg, you first need to transfer your weight into the opposite leg.

So, if you sweep the right leg up into Right Dog Stance, your attention goes into the left leg first softening and relaxing it down so the right leg can come up without any tension but with intention in the heel.

When you take the right leg down your attention goes into the left leg strengthening it so the right leg can soften and relax, allowing it to come back down without any tension but with intention in the heel.

Take time to practice this exercise below as there is a lot going on.

Stand in Eagle stance with your **attention** in both feet but no **tension**. Transfer the weight and **attention** into the right leg soften and letting the knee bend and then transfer your **intention** into the left heel, raise the toes up and sweep the left leg up and out directly in front of you into Left Dog Stance, Relax the toes down and allow the leg to come back down towards the body but keep your intention in the heel, Sweep the leg over and out 90° to your left side but only turning the torso 45° to the left, and placing the heel down opening the hips up, now place the toes down, transferring the weight and **attention** into the left leg soften and allowing the knee to bend while placing your **intention** into the right heel raising the toes up and turning the torso a further 45° to the left closing the hips up and turning the waist to the left completing the 90° turn to the left, now transfer the weight and **attention** into the right leg soften and letting the knee bend and transfer your **intention** into the left leg and draw it back into Left Duck Stance and then raise the toes up into Left Monkey Stance, now step back into Eagle stance placing the **attention** into both feet but no **tension**.

Now do the same again so you turn in a circle to the left, do the same twice more completing the 360° circle then do the same thing turning to the right and sweeping the right leg up into Right Dog Stance.

If you find it uncomfortable to turn a complete circle by turning 90° each time with 4 sweeps up with the leg, complete the 360° circle but do it with 8,7,6,5 sweeps up with the leg until you feel more comfortable turning and completing the circle.

This keeps you in perfect balance with yin and yang. One leg works while the other relaxes or does each leg work and relax at the same time?

The Feet

I have mentioned before the three points of the feet to be aware of as we practice the stances and hand form which are, the pad of the big toe, the pad of the little toe and the underside edge of the heel.

Knees and Toes (Cheese and Toast)

The cheese goes on top of the toast.

The knees should be governed by the toe direction.

If your toes are pointing in one direction when you are doing a stance and your knee is pointing in the opposite direction you are liable to damage the knees, the toe direction protects the knees from damage.

Do this exercise for demonstration purposes.

Stand with the heels together with the toes pointing out directly to each side, this will be uncomfortable and will bring the knees to collapse inwards and put tension in the pelvic area.

Now pull the toes in so they are touching each other side by side, you will find this will pull your body into a tense state and put pressure on the knees and lower spine, STAND TO ATTENTION is STANDING IN TENTION.

Now try and find a mid-point with the toes pointing out slightly at an angle, so the knees can open and relax down slightly allowing them to point in the direction of the toes, your spine will become soft and relaxed so you can turn in any direction by first softening and relaxing the ankles, knees, so the hips can open the waist can turn then the shoulders and finally the head if it is needed.

This is a correct Eagle stance; with the toes of both feet pointing out slightly at an angle with the weight evenly spread over both feet so the knees can open and relax down slightly, do not raise the body up when you turn.

When in Bear or Riding Horse stance the toes of both feet should be pointing directly forwards with the knees relaxed down over each foot above the direction of the toes.

When in Leopard stance the toes of both feet should be pointing directly forwards with the weight relaxed down over one foot with the knee above the foot, do not push the hip out past the foot as the knee will collapse inwards.

Dragon, Snake stance have the front foot toes pointing directly forwards with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes and the back foot pointing out slight at an angle with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes.

Monkey and Duck stance have front toes pointing directly forwards with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes and the back foot pointing out slight at an angle with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes.

Cat stance has the front foot toes pointing directly forwards with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes with the ball of the foot resting gently on the ground (with no weight in it) so the foot can turn the torso in any direction, with the back foot pointing out slight at an angle with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes.

Crane and Dog have the front foot toes pointing directly forwards with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes the back foot (which is the weight bearing foot) pointing out slight with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes.

Crossed leg stance has the front foot toes pointing out slight at an angle with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes, the back foot toes have the option depending on

which stance you come from, they can point directly forwards or point out slight as long as the knee points in the same direction as the toes.

Scissor stance has the option depending on which stance you come from, they can point directly forwards or point out slight as long as the knee points in the same direction as the toes, the back foot toes pointing out slight at an angle with the knee pointing in the direction of the toes.

A word of warning here.

I have mentioned to be comfortable and feel the stances rather than look to see if your stance is correct.

Some of you over the years may have got very comfortable in an incorrect posture so when you stand in the stances as above, they may feel very uncomfortable as you have spent many years with the toes pointing in or out leaving the knees to collapse in or out which will have put wear and maybe tear on the knees.

So, when you practise the above stances and place the toes pointing forwards the feel might be they are pointing inwards but when you look they are not.

Do the stance first then look and check, realign if necessary and get to know the correct feel.