



KUNG FU STANCES

2024-2025

ONLY FOR WARRIORS





MA BU



Practicing the Ma Bu (horse stance) correctly requires attention to detail and gradual progression to avoid injury.

Proper Form:

- **Feet:** Shoulder-width apart or slightly wider. Toes should point slightly outward (around 30-45 degrees).
- **Knees:** Bend your knees until your thighs are roughly parallel to the ground, or slightly above. Your knees should track over your toes – avoid letting them cave inward (knees valgus) or outward (knees varus).
- **Hips:** Lower your hips until they are slightly lower than your knees. Keep your hips tucked and aligned with your knees.
- **Back:** Keep your back straight, but not rigid. Engage your core muscles to support your spine and prevent slouching or arching.
- **Chest:** Keep your chest open and shoulders relaxed, avoiding hunching.
- **Head:** Keep your head up, chin parallel to the ground, and eyes looking forward.
- **Weight Distribution:** Your weight should be evenly distributed between both legs.
- **Breathing:** Maintain consistent, deep breathing throughout the stance.

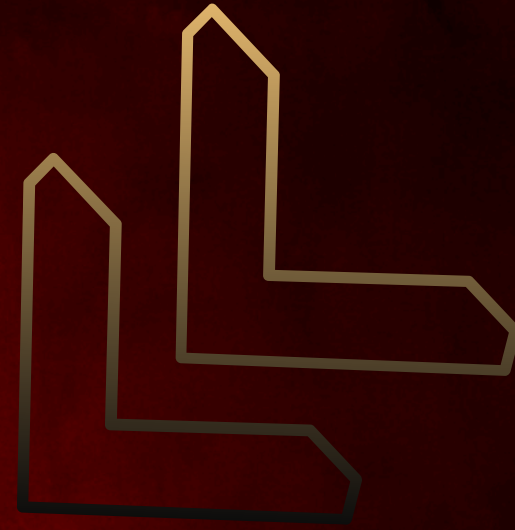


MA BU

Gradual Progression:

1. **Short Holds:** Start with very short holds (15-30 seconds) to get a feel for the position. Focus on maintaining correct form.
2. **Increased Duration:** Gradually increase the hold time as your strength and endurance improve. Aim for longer holds (1-3 minutes) but prioritize perfect form over length.
3. **Variations:** Once you're comfortable with the basic stance, you can explore variations, such as moving your hands (e.g., holding weights, fists, or practicing arm movements).
4. **Listen to Your Body:** If you experience pain, stop immediately. Pain is a signal that something is wrong with your form or you're pushing yourself too hard.





MA BU

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- **Knees collapsing inwards or outwards:** This can lead to knee injuries. Focus on keeping your knees aligned with your toes.
- **Rounding the back:** This puts strain on your spine. Maintain a straight back by engaging your core.
- **Tilting the hips forward or backward:** This imbalances your weight and can lead to fatigue or injury.
- **Holding your breath:** This restricts blood flow and can lead to dizziness. Maintain consistent, deep breathing.
- **Rushing the process:** Be patient and gradually increase the duration and difficulty.





MA BU

Practice Plan Suggestion:

- **Day 1-3:** 3 sets of 30-second holds, focusing on perfect form.
- **Day 4-7:** 3 sets of 1-minute holds.
- **Day 8-14:** 3 sets of 1.5-minute holds.
- **Day 15 onwards:** Gradually increase hold time up to 3-5 minutes, depending on your fitness level. Consider incorporating variations.

Remember to consult a qualified martial arts instructor or physical therapist for personalized guidance and feedback. They can help ensure you're practicing correctly and safely. Videos demonstrating proper Ma Bu form can also be helpful, but remember to always prioritize a qualified instructor's feedback.



GONG BU



The Gong Bu (bow stance) is another crucial stance in many martial arts. Practicing it correctly requires similar attention to detail as the Ma Bu, focusing on balance, stability, and proper alignment.

Proper Form:

- **Feet:** Start with your feet shoulder-width apart. Step one foot forward, placing it about a leg's length ahead of your back foot. The angle of your front foot can vary slightly depending on the specific martial art, but generally, it should be roughly 45 degrees. Your back foot should be pointing more directly to the rear.
- **Knees:** Bend both knees, keeping them aligned with your ankles and feet. The front knee should be bent until it's directly above your ankle, and the angle of your front knee should ideally be less than 90 degrees (avoid over-bending). Your back knee should be bent, but only to the extent necessary to maintain balance. It should not touch the ground.
- **Hips:** Lower your hips, keeping them level. Imagine a straight line running from your hips to your heels.
- **Back:** Keep your spine straight and your core engaged. Avoid hunching or arching.
- **Chest:** Keep your chest open and your shoulders relaxed.
- **Head:** Keep your head up with your chin parallel to the ground, and your eyes looking forward.
- **Weight Distribution:** Your weight should be more concentrated on the front leg, but still maintain balance on both legs. Avoid shifting all your weight to the front or back foot.
- **Breathing:** Maintain consistent, deep breathing.



GONG BU



Gradual Progression:

Similar to the Ma Bu, start with short holds (15–30 seconds) and gradually increase the duration as you build strength and endurance. Focus on maintaining perfect form over holding the stance for extended periods. Introduce variations gradually. Listen to your body; pain should be a signal to stop.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

1. **Front knee extending beyond the toe:** This puts excessive strain on your knee joint and increases the risk of injury.
2. **Back knee touching the ground:** This removes much of the challenge and engagement required for the stance.
3. **Leaning too far forward or backward:** This shifts your weight distribution, causing imbalance and strain.
4. **Rounding your back:** This increases spinal stress.
5. **Uneven weight distribution:** Keep the majority of weight on the front leg while maintaining balance.



GONG BU



Practice Plan Suggestion:

This mirrors the Ma Bu suggestion, but adapted to the Gong Bu:

- **Day 1-3:** 3 sets of **30-second holds, focusing on perfect form.**
- **Day 4-7:** 3 sets of 1-minute holds.
- **Day 8-14:** 3 sets of 1.5-minute holds.
- **Day 15 onwards:** Gradually increase hold time (up to 2-3 minutes), depending on your fitness level. Incorporate variations, such as shifting weight slightly or performing arm movements.

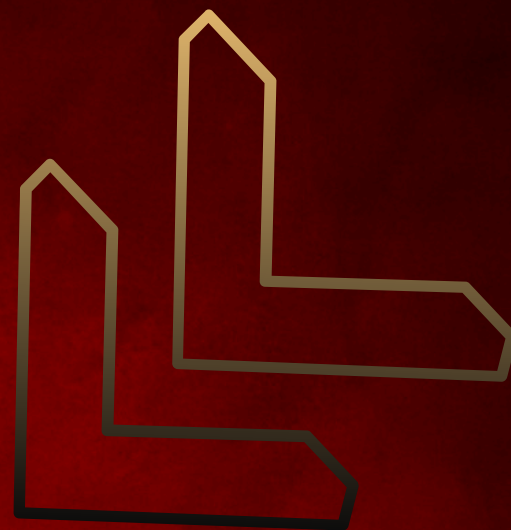
Important Considerations:

- **Finding an Instructor:** The best way to learn Gong Bu (and other stances) correctly is through a qualified instructor. They can provide personalized feedback and corrections.
- **Visual Aids:** Videos demonstrating correct Gong Bu form can be helpful supplementary learning tools.
- **Flexibility and Strength:** Regular stretching and strengthening exercises can significantly improve your ability to hold the stance correctly and for longer periods.

Remember to listen to your body and stop if you experience pain. Consistent and mindful practice, emphasizing perfect form, is key to mastering the Gong Bu.



XIE BU



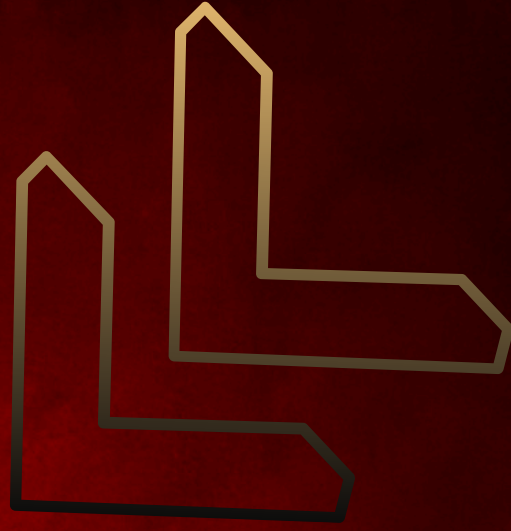
The Xie Bu (bow and arrow stance) is a more advanced stance demanding excellent balance and coordination. Correct practice is crucial to avoid injury.

Proper Form:

- **Feet:** Begin with your feet shoulder-width apart. Then, step one foot forward and turn it approximately 90 degrees outward. Your rear foot should be angled slightly outward as well, but less than the front foot. The distance between your feet should be about 1-1.5 times the length of your front leg.
- **Knees:** Bend your front knee until it's roughly above your ankle, or slightly behind it. The back knee should remain straight or slightly bent (but not touching the ground). Keep your knees aligned with your feet; avoid any inward or outward collapse.
- **Hips:** Your hips should be relatively square to the front, but slightly rotated towards the front foot. Maintain a balanced distribution of your weight.
- **Back:** Keep your back straight but not stiff. Engage your core muscles to maintain stability and prevent rounding your back.
- **Chest:** Keep your chest open and shoulders relaxed.
- **Head:** Keep your head up, eyes looking forward, and chin parallel to the ground.
- **Weight Distribution:** The weight should be predominantly on your front leg but with a sufficient amount on the back leg to maintain stability and balance. This takes practice and fine-tuning.
- **Breathing:** Maintain consistent, deep breathing throughout the stance.



XIE BU



Gradual Progression:

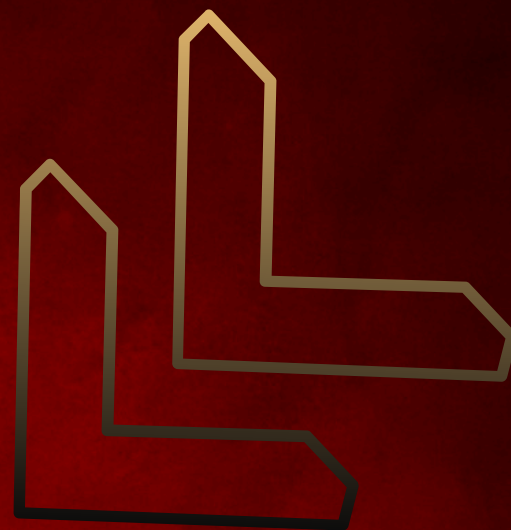
As with Ma Bu and Gong Bu, start with short holds (15-30 seconds) and gradually increase the duration as your strength, balance, and coordination improve. Prioritize perfect form over duration. Introduce variations slowly. Pay close attention to your body and stop immediately if you feel any pain.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- **Front knee collapsing inward or outward:** This can lead to knee injury. Ensure your knee is tracking directly over your toes.
- **Leaning too far forward or backward:** This throws off your balance. Focus on maintaining a stable center of gravity.
- **Rounding your back:** Engage your core to prevent this; it places strain on your spine.
- **Back knee touching the ground:** This compromises the stability and challenge of the stance.
- **Uneven weight distribution:** Find the right balance; too much weight on the front leg will strain the knee, and too much weight on the back leg will compromise your stability.



XIE BU



Practice Plan Suggestion:

This builds upon the previous stance practice plans:

- **Day 1-3:** Practice holding the Xie Bu for 3 sets of 15-second holds, focusing intensely on perfect form. If you find it challenging to maintain balance, do shorter holds and repeat more often.
- **Day 4-7:** 3 sets of 30-second holds. If balance remains an issue, consider using a wall or chair for light support, gradually reducing support as balance improves.
- **Day 8-14:** 3 sets of 45-second holds. Continue working on maintaining stability and good posture.
- **Day 15 onwards:** Gradually increase hold times (aiming for 1-2 minutes per set), but only as your form and balance improve.

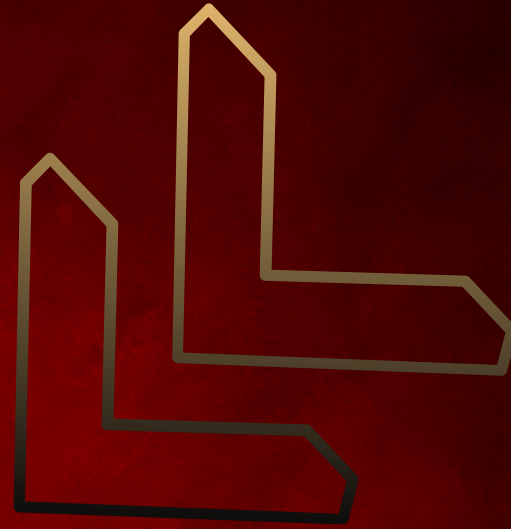
Important Considerations:

- **Experienced Instructor:** Given the complexity of the Xie Bu, guidance from a qualified instructor is highly recommended. They can provide personalized feedback and correct any flaws in your technique before they become ingrained habits.
- **Flexibility and Strength:** Improved flexibility (particularly in the hips and legs) and core strength are essential for mastering the Xie Bu. Incorporate stretching and strengthening exercises into your training regimen.
- **Progressive Overload:** Gradually increase the challenge. Once comfortable holding for a duration, you can add light hand weights or incorporate slow, controlled movements of the arms.

Remember: Patience and consistent practice are key. Focus on perfect form and gradual progression to avoid injury and maximize your progress.



PU BU



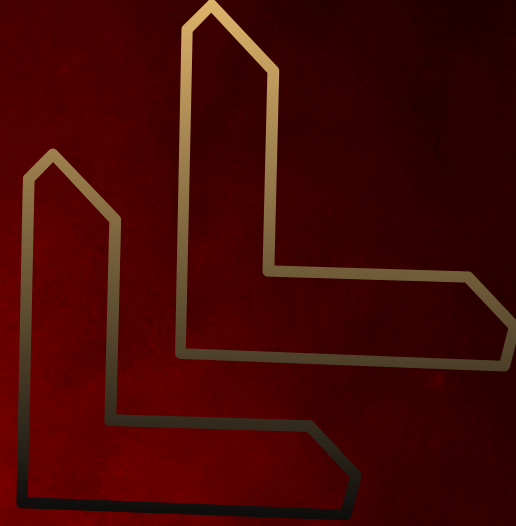
The Pu Bu (step-up stance) is a fundamental stance used in many martial arts styles. While seemingly simpler than stances like Ma Bu or Xie Bu, correct execution is vital for developing power, balance, and stability. Here's how to practice it effectively:

Proper Form:

- **Feet:** Begin by standing with your feet shoulder-width apart. Step forward with one foot, placing it a comfortable distance ahead (approximately one leg's length). The angle of your front foot can be slightly outward, but it's less critical than in stances like Gong Bu or Xie Bu.
- **Knees:** Bend your front knee so that it's directly above your ankle, keeping your knee aligned with your toes. Avoid letting your knee extend past your toes. The back leg should remain straight, or nearly straight – but not locked stiffly. Maintaining a slight bend in the back leg helps with balance and prevents strain on the knee joint.
- **Hips:** Keep your hips aligned with your knees and maintain a level posture. Avoid tilting your hips forward or backward.
- **Back:** Keep your back straight and your core engaged to maintain stability and prevent slouching.
- **Chest:** Maintain an open chest and relaxed shoulders. Avoid hunching.
- **Head:** Keep your head up, your chin parallel to the ground, eyes looking forward.
- **Weight Distribution:** Most of your weight should be on the front leg. The back leg primarily provides stability and balance.
- **Breathing:** Maintain consistent, deep breathing throughout.



PU BU



Gradual Progression:

Similar to other stances, start with short holds (15–30 seconds) focusing intensely on correct form. Gradually increase the duration as your strength and balance improve. Begin by holding the stance for short periods, focusing on maintaining balance and alignment. As your strength and balance improve, gradually increase the hold time.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- **Front knee extending beyond the toe:** This puts undue stress on your knee joint. Keep your knee aligned with your ankle and toes.
- **Back knee bending excessively:** While a slight bend is acceptable, excessive bending shifts the weight distribution and reduces stability.
- **Leaning too far forward or backward:** Keep your upper body upright and centered.
- **Rounding your back:** Engage your core to maintain a straight back.
- **Uneven weight distribution:** Maintain a stable stance with the majority of weight on the front leg.



PU BU

Practice Plan Suggestion:

- **Day 1-3:** 3 sets of 30-second holds of the Pu Bu, focusing intently on correct form.
- **Day 4-7:** 3 sets of 45-second holds.
- **Day 8-14:** 3 sets of 1-minute holds.
- **Day 15 onwards:** Gradually increase hold times (up to 2 minutes per set), incorporating variations such as shifting weight slightly from side to side or performing slow, controlled arm movements while maintaining the stance.

Important Considerations:

- **Qualified Instructor:** The guidance of a qualified martial arts instructor is highly recommended, especially to learn the nuances and subtleties that can be missed.
- **Flexibility and Strength:** Improving flexibility (especially in the hips and legs) and strengthening your core muscles will enhance your ability to perform the Pu Bu correctly and for longer periods.
- **Variations:** Once you've mastered the basic Pu Bu, you can progress to variations such as shifting weight slightly from side to side while maintaining balance, incorporating slow arm movements, or practicing with weighted equipment.

Remember: Consistent practice with a focus on maintaining perfect form is crucial for mastering the Pu Bu. Don't rush the process; gradual progression is key to avoiding injuries.





XU BU



The Xu Bu (cross-step stance) is a dynamic stance requiring good balance and coordination. Correct practice is essential to develop the necessary skills and avoid injury.

Proper Form:

- **Feet:** Start with feet shoulder-width apart. Cross your right foot behind your left foot, positioning it so your right heel is roughly aligned with the arch of your left foot. The distance between your feet should be comfortable – roughly the length of your foot. The angle of your feet will depend on the specific martial art style; generally, your feet are pointed slightly outwards.
- **Knees:** Bend both knees, but primarily the front (left) knee. The amount of bend will depend on the style and intended application, ranging from a slight bend to a deeper bend, but never beyond your toes. The back (right) knee should remain relatively straight or have a slight bend to aid in balance. Always keep your knees tracking directly over your toes – avoid letting them cave inwards or outwards.
- **Hips:** Maintain a level hip position; avoid tilting your hips forward or backward. Your hips should be aligned with your knees.
- **Back:** Keep your back straight, engaging your core muscles to support your spine and prevent slouching or arching.
- **Chest:** Keep your chest open, and shoulders relaxed and down.
- **Head:** Keep your head up, with your chin parallel to the ground, and eyes looking forward.
- **Weight Distribution:** Your weight should be primarily on your front (left) leg, with the **back (right) leg providing support and balance.**
- **Breathing:** Maintain steady, controlled breathing.



XU BU



Gradual Progression:

As with other stances, begin with shorter holds (15–30 seconds), focusing on achieving perfect form. Gradually increase the hold duration as your balance and coordination improve.

Common Mistakes to Avoid:

- **Knees collapsing inwards or outwards:** This can lead to knee injuries. Keep your knees aligned with your ankles.
- **Leaning too far forward or backward:** This compromises your balance and stability. Maintain an upright posture.
- **Uneven weight distribution:** The majority of your weight should be on your front leg, but the back leg is crucial for maintaining balance.
- **Rounding your back:** Engage your core muscles to prevent this.
- **Feet too close or too far apart:** Find a comfortable spacing that allows for balance and stability without compromising the stance.



XU BU



Practice Plan Suggestion:

- **Day 1-3:** 3 sets of 30-second holds, concentrating heavily on perfect form.
- **Day 4-7:** 3 sets of 45-second holds.
- **Day 8-14:** 3 sets of 1-minute holds.
- **Day 15 onwards:** Gradually increase the hold time (up to 1.5-2 minutes), incorporating variations like shifting weight subtly or adding slow arm movements while maintaining balance.

Important Considerations:

- **Instruction:** Learning the Xu Bu from a qualified instructor is highly beneficial, providing personalized feedback and corrections.
- **Flexibility and Strength:** Improved flexibility and core strength significantly enhance your ability to hold the Xu Bu correctly and for longer durations.
- **Variations:** Once comfortable with the basic Xu Bu, explore variations, such as performing the stance with the opposite leg forward or practicing slow, controlled movements of the arms and upper body while maintaining the stance.

Remember: Consistent practice with a focus on proper form and gradual progression is vital for mastering the Xu Bu and avoiding injuries. Prioritize quality over quantity, focusing on perfecting your technique before increasing the hold duration.



Mastering the fundamental stances of Kung Fu—**Ma Bu** (Horse Stance), **Gong Bu** (Bow Stance), **Xie Bu** (Bow and Arrow Stance), **Pu Bu** (Step-Up Stance), and **Xu Bu** (Cross-Step Stance)—is crucial for developing strength, balance, coordination, and the very foundation of your martial arts journey. Each stance presents unique challenges and rewards, building a solid base for more advanced techniques.



We invite you to experience authentic Kung Fu training, either in our vibrant environment in China, in **international retreats**, or through our comprehensive **online program**. Our expert instructors will guide you through:

- **Precise Stance Technique:** Learn the nuances of each stance, ensuring correct form and preventing injury. We emphasize mindful practice, focusing on quality over speed.
- **Gradual Progression:** Our structured curriculum allows you to progress at your own pace, building a strong foundation before moving onto more advanced techniques.
- **Personalized Feedback:** Whether in person or online, you'll receive personalized feedback to refine your technique and maximize your potential.
- **A Supportive Community:** Connect with fellow Kung Fu enthusiasts in a positive and encouraging environment.
- **Immersive Cultural Experience** (China): For those training in China, immerse yourself in the rich culture and history that birthed Kung Fu.

Don't just learn the stances; **master them**. Join us and unlock the power and grace of Kung Fu. Visit our website at **shaolintemple.com** to learn more about our China, international retreats and online Kung Fu programs, and begin your journey today!

