

# Kung Fu

**Kung Fu**, also known as **Wushu**, is a traditional Chinese martial art that combines physical training, self-defence, and philosophical principles. The term “Kung Fu” literally means “skill achieved through hard work”, emphasising that **mastery** comes from years of disciplined practice rather than innate talent alone. Originating over 4,000 years ago, Kung Fu has evolved into a diverse system of techniques, styles, and schools, each with unique movements, strategies, and philosophies. Beyond combat, Kung Fu also promotes physical fitness, mental focus, and spiritual growth, making it a holistic practice for body and mind.



## ■ Styles and techniques

There are hundreds of Kung Fu styles, often classified into Northern and Southern styles, based on geography and technique. **Northern styles**, such as Changquan (long fist), are known for their high kicks, extended **stances**, and acrobatic movements. **Southern styles**, including Hung Gar and Wing Chun, focus more on strong hand techniques, low stances, and close-range combat. Kung Fu incorporates punches, kicks, joint locks, throws, and weapon training.

In addition, forms known as “katas” or “taolu” are sequences of movements that help students practice balance, speed, strength, and precision. Many styles also emphasise breathing, internal energy (Qi), and mental discipline.

**mastery:** *padronanza, maestria*  
**stance:** *posizione*

## ■ Philosophy and discipline

Kung Fu is more than physical skill; it is rooted in Chinese philosophy, particularly Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. Respect for teachers and elders, humility, patience, and self-control are fundamental values for practitioners. Meditation, controlled breathing, and mindfulness are often incorporated into training to enhance mental clarity and focus. Traditional Kung Fu also teaches that martial arts should be used only for self-defence or protection of others, reflecting the belief that strength must be balanced by moral responsibility. This philosophical aspect distinguishes Kung Fu from mere fighting techniques, making it a way of life for many practitioners.

## ■ Modern practice and global influence

Today, Kung Fu has spread worldwide through films, competitions, and martial arts schools. Famous figures like Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, and Jet Li popularised Kung Fu in cinema, inspiring generations of students all over the world. Modern competitions, governed by organisations such as the **International Wushu Federation**, focus on both performance (forms) and combat (sparring). Despite its global popularity, traditional schools in China continue to preserve ancient techniques, philosophy, and training methods, ensuring that Kung Fu remains a living art that balances history, skill, and personal growth.



**1**  Write the questions to the following answers.

- 1. Kung Fu, also known as Wushu, is a traditional Chinese martial art that combines physical training, self-defence techniques, and philosophical principles, promoting strength, focus, and mental discipline.
- 2. The mastery in Kung Fu comes from years of disciplined practice and dedication, rather than natural talent alone.
- 3. Kung Fu has developed into a diverse system of styles, techniques, and schools, each with unique movements, strategies, and philosophies, always focusing on physical fitness, mental focus, and spiritual growth.
- 4. Northern styles, such as Changquan, emphasise high kicks, extended stances, and acrobatic movements, while southern styles, like Hung Gar and Wing Chun, focus on strong hand techniques, low stances, and close-range combat.
- 5. Kung Fu incorporates punches, kicks, throws, and weapons training. Students also practice sequences which develop balance, speed, precision, and coordination, combined with breathing exercises and internal energy training.
- 6. Practitioners learn values such as respect and self-control, and a balance between strength and moral responsibility.
- 7. Kung Fu has gained popularity and global recognition through films and media.
- 8. Traditional schools in China preserve ancient techniques, philosophy, and methods that maintain Kung Fu as a living art.

**2**  Write the terms corresponding to each definition.

- 1. A position or posture used in fighting or training. ....
- 2. Fighting practice with a partner to apply techniques safely. ....
- 3. A type of activity or sport that involves combat skills. ....
- 4. Skill or expertise gained through long-term practice. ....
- 5. The ability to protect oneself from attack. ....
- 6. Energetic flow inside the body believed to enhance strength and focus. ....
- 7. Flexible and physically agile movements, often involving flips or jumps. ....
- 8. Control, self-restraint, and consistent training. ....



3 Read the text and fill the gaps with the missing words.

regions • develop • jumps- combat • well-known • aerial • movements • focus • competitions • training

**The Northern Styles of Kung Fu**

Northern Kung Fu styles are some of the most **1.** ..... and visually impressive martial arts techniques in China. These styles originated in the northern **2.** ..... of China, where open spaces allowed practitioners to develop long, extended movements. Northern styles are characterised by high, powerful kicks, wide stances, and acrobatic **3.** ....., making them both dynamic and athletic. Famous Northern styles include Changquan, Shaolin Kung Fu, and Northern Praying Mantis. These styles focus on speed, flexibility, and precision, **4.** ..... both the upper and lower body equally. Practitioners learn long sequences of **5.** ....., called taolu, which combine punches, kicks, and jumps into

fluid routines. Acrobatic techniques, such as flips, **6.** ..... kicks, and spinning strikes, are a hallmark of Northern Kung Fu and are often used in **7.** ..... to impress judges and audiences. Northern styles also emphasise mental **8.** ..... and discipline, requiring years of practice to master balance, timing, and coordination. While these techniques are effective for **9.** ....., they are also practised for fitness, self-expression, and cultural preservation. Today, Northern Kung Fu remains a popular choice for students worldwide who want to **10.** ..... strength, agility, and confidence through a traditional Chinese martial art.

Adapted from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern\\_Shaolin\\_kung\\_fu](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Shaolin_kung_fu)