



# Yon Ch'uan Basics

## Rooting and Blending

By

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Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts is based on ancient martial arts principles that you can read about on our website, in the [Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts Black Belt Study Guide](#) and [The Chinese Five Word Song](#).

During a recent Grace Martial Arts class we talked about the important principles of Rooting and Blending. We are thankful to Grand Master Robert Xavier for teaching us these principles.

# Rooting

*When in motion one is still rooted. Master Li Tung Fung, p 23*

*You must stand firmly. Root the ground first, otherwise no use. So, when you root to the ground, and your strength is in your hind leg and heel. In the beginning, we must practice all the time to be rooted. Grand Master John Chung Li, p 33*

## *The Chinese Five Word Song*

The objective of “rooting” in martial arts / self defense is to have your feet rooted (firmly planted) to the ground. If you aren't rooted in either foot, you are easily off-balanced. You need good rooting for all martial techniques.

Classical Chinese Kung Fu rooting methods, mid-line blocks and parries, throws, submission holds, pressure points, locks, escapes and counters are an integral part of the *First* and *Second Zone* training methods.

How do we train to be rooted during a physical exchange (attack)? We learn and practice the principles until our movement is always rooted no matter which Yon Ch'uan techniques we use.

*The shifting of weight from one leg to another is required quite often in our exercise. Always, when one leg is heavy, the other should be light. The heavy leg gives balance to the whole body, while the light leg should be so light that there appears to be nothing on which to move. If this principle of light and heavy is not followed, you will make yourself easily 'beatable' because you will have no rooting. GM Li, Five Word Song, p 48*

Rooting is a whole-body exercise. It is not enough just to have our feet in the right place (stance). We also need to combine our hands and arms to our feet and legs along with our waist and spine directing our self-defense movement.

*Our legs work like a bow, and our advance and retreat should be controlled from the waist by the spine. Our backs and our arms should be rounded. Five Word Song, p 34*

*We never fall because rooting firmly and all our movements are combined in one; combined together. All movement is controlled by your spine and spine we do according to what wishes. Five Word Song, p 72*

*Whenever you take a step, your hands should work with it. This means your hind leg pushes forward your body and hands without delay. Legs should be well rooted into the ground. Five Word Song, p 68*

## Uprooting

The object for the Yon Ch'uan Martial Arts practitioner is to be “rooted” so they can easily “uproot” their opponent. Personal safety is the objective. Self defense is the process leading to meeting the objective. Uprooting your opponent while you remain rooted is important to your safety.

We learn to use a variety of techniques to uproot an opponent.

- Mid-line blocks and parries can uproot an opponent
- Throws can uproot an opponent
- Submission holds can uproot an opponent
- Pressure point techniques can uproot an opponent
- Escape techniques can uproot an opponent
- Counters can uproot an opponent





Grandmaster John Chung Li

The person attacking you has an evil intent to control or harm you. Yon Ch'uan practitioners have many options to accomplish their objective of personal safety.

Grand Master Li wrote:

*“Your enemy can see and feel your internal force coming, but as soon as they try to grab you, it goes away. First it is hard, then soft. It is deceptive. This internal force is trained from slow, even, linked-together*

*movements. It is especially helped by rooting to the ground, and by always staying balanced during the process of movement.” Five Word Song, p 40*

The Yon Ch'uan student learns a variety of martial techniques that they can select at will when attacked. They follow a carefully designed curriculum that trains body, mind and spirit to work together effectively and efficiently to defend from harm.

A five-step defense eventually becomes a one-step defense as the student masters every aspect of rooting and technique.

*At first while doing the exercise, one reveals each feature of the movement, but with practice the features flow into one. Five Word Song, 22*

## Blending

*Once the enemy is on the offensive, the enemy is defeated. Five Word Song, p 25*

That is an important point for us to understand. Untrained people often “freeze” when someone moves toward them in an aggressive manner. However, Yon Ch'uan practitioners learn to use the movement of the attacker to “blend” with them for the purpose of evading, uprooting and countering.

We learn how to move from a “relaxed state.” The Five Word Song refers to “relaxing and flexing of movement are self-determined “(p 23). The body moves fastest from a calm, relaxed posture or stance. That doesn't mean you are not ready to defend. It simply means that you are relaxed in your readiness.

“Relaxed readiness” comes from both training and awareness. Yon Ch'uan students train to be aware of their surroundings (readiness) and able to quickly do five things that are central to blending with your opponent's attack:

- Yield
- Clear
- Contact
- Control
- Counter

It is the process of yielding, emptying, sticking, entwining, and penetrating that makes “blending” so effective.

We do that in Yon Ch'uan by meeting the forceful attack of an opponent with circular movements that interpret the force and yield to it. Because we are blending with the attacker's movements through yielding and emptying, we are able to use a lighter contact to stick, entwine and penetrate (counter). The counter may be a block and parry that leads to a strike, kick, submission hold or throw. We choose the countering technique based on the circumstance and desired outcome. We can be compassionate or harsh – whichever is appropriate.

Blending with an opponent gives the Yon Ch'uan practitioners the opportunity to lead the attacker to over-extend their advance and then uproot them with ease. We use the attacker's strength against them, which means a trained smaller person can defend well against a larger opponent.

We accomplish the objective of personal safety by overcoming aggression through the blending process of evasion, absorption, reflection and escape. If necessary, we can subdue with strikes and kicks.

*When the opponent is hard, then one is soft. Yield to force when it reveals itself. If your opponent is quicker than you are, and his strength has reached you, yield further. Yield, and lead your opponent into emptiness.*  
*Five Word Song, p 28*

You can purchase [a paperback](#) or a [digital copy](#) of *The Chinese Five Word Song*.