

第一課 (A) [after L-1]

名不正則言不順，言不順則事不成

Míng bú zhèng zé yán bú shùn, yán bú shùn zé shì bù chéng.

name not proper then words not effective, words not effective then things won't succeed

A well-known citation from Confucius' *Analects*, on importance of matching word to concept.
Classical Chinese.

PART I

甲. General Features of Chinese Texts

1. *Size* Regardless of complexity, characters are matched in overall size, fitting into an imaginary rectangle along the lines indicated in the following example (in simplified characters). For this reason, characters are also called fāngkuàizì 'squared writing'.

上 海 天 气 很 热 。 Shànghǎi tiānqì hěn rè.

2. *Spacing* Characters are evenly spaced regardless of whether they represent whole words or components of words. Compare the character version of the sentence above and the pinyin version. Though the convention is not always consistently followed, pinyin places spaces between words rather than syllables. Characters are evenly spaced and disregard word boundaries.

3. *Punctuation* Modern Chinese written material makes use of punctuation conventions that are similar in form to those of English, though not always identical in function:

Periods, full stops: traditionally ‘。’, but nowadays also ‘.’.

Commas: ‘，’ and ‘、’, the latter for lists (enumeration).

Quotes: 「-」 or 《》, but also ‘ ’ and “ ”.

Proper names: usually unmarked, though in a few texts, indicated by wavy underline. There is nothing comparable to a capital letter in Chinese.

Other punctuation will be noted as encountered.

4. *Direction* Traditionally, Chinese has been written downwards, from right column to left. Major writing reforms instituted in the 1950s in the PRC not only formalized a set of simplified characters (see next item) but required them

to be written horizontally, from left to right, like modern European languages. As a result, Chinese texts now come in two basic formats. Material originating prior to the reforms, or in Taiwan and traditional overseas communities after the reforms, is written with traditional characters that are – with a few exceptions such as headlines and forms - arranged vertically (top to bottom and right to left). Material originating in the Mainland, in Singapore (again, with some exceptions for religious or special genres) and in some overseas communities after the reforms of the 1950s is written with simplified characters arranged horizontally, left to right.

(Chinese seems to have provided the model for most of the scripts that write vertically – at least in East Asia. Vertical writing is still the norm in Japan, coexisting with horizontal writing. And other scripts of the region, such as Mongolian, whose writing system derives ultimately from an Indian prototype, have also followed the Chinese model.)

5. *Simplified (jiǎntǐzì) versus traditional characters (fántǐzì)*

For almost 2000 years in China, serious genres of writing were written in the *kāishū* script ('model writing') that first appeared in the early centuries of the first millennium (AD). Other styles coexisted with it, but these were for special purposes, such as seals, calligraphy, or handwritten and informal writing. In the 1950s, the Mainland government, seeking to increase the literacy rate, introduced sets of simplified characters to replace many of the more complicated of the traditional forms. Many of these simplified characters were based on calligraphic and other styles in earlier use in *non-kaishu* styles; but others were novel graphs that followed traditional patterns of character creation. Ultimately, the result was a new *kaishu* set that replaced many of the more complicated characters with simplified ones. This was officially adopted by the PRC in the late 1950s and (for most purposes) by Singapore in the 1960s.

Meanwhile, Taiwan, most overseas Chinese communities and, until its return to the PRC, Hong Kong, retained the traditional set of characters as their standard, along with vertical writing. The two sets are usually called 'simplified' and 'traditional' in English, *jiǎntǐzì* ('simple-body-characters') and *fántǐzì* ('complicated-body-characters') in Chinese. *Jiǎntǐzì* have fewer strokes, which presumably makes them easier to write; but which of the two systems is easier to read, or easier to recall and process, remains an open question.

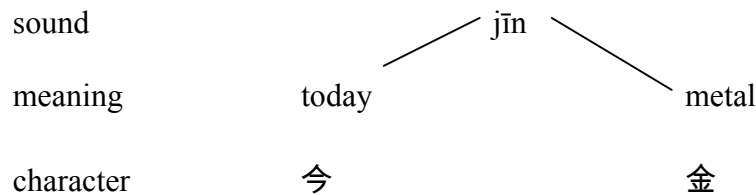
Jiǎntǐzì and *fántǐzì* should not be thought of as two writing systems, for not only are there many characters with only one form (也 yě, 很 hěn, 好 hǎo etc), but of those that have two forms, the vast majority exhibit only minor, regular differences, eg: 说/說, 饭/飯. What is left are perhaps 3 dozen relatively common characters with distinctively divergent forms such as: 这/這, 买/買. And careful inspection reveals that even they often have elements in common. For native Chinese readers, the two systems represent only a

minor inconvenience. Learners generally focus on one system for writing, but soon get used to reading in both.

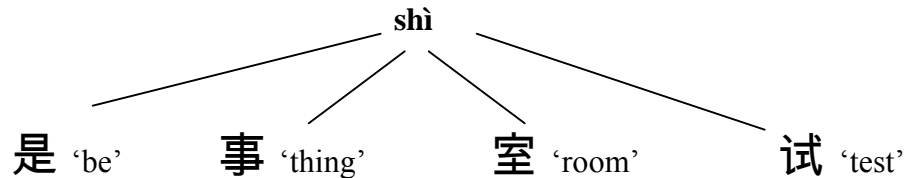
乙. Function

As noted earlier, characters represent not just syllables, but syllables of particular words (whole words or parts of words). In other words, characters generally function as logograms -- signs for words. Though they can be adapted to the task of representing syllables (irrespective of meaning), as when they are used to transliterate foreign names of places, when they serve this function they are seen as characters with their meanings suppressed (or at least, dimmed), eg: 意大利 Yìdàlì 'Italy', with the meanings 'intention+big+gain' suppressed.

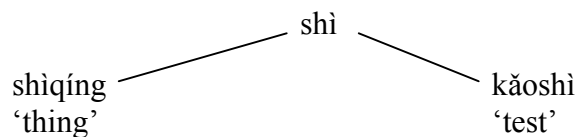
In practice, words of identical sound (homophones) will usually be written with different characters.



Such homophony is common in Chinese at the syllable level (as the *shi*-story, described in the introductory chapter, illustrated). Here, for example, are some common words or word parts all pronounced shì:



But except for high-frequency words (such as 是 'be'), words in Mandarin are usually compound, consisting of several syllables. At the level of the word, homophony is far rarer. In Chinese language word-processing where the input is in *pinyin*, typing shiqing and kaoshi (most input systems do not require tones) will elicit only two or three options, and since most word processors organize options by frequency, in practice, this means that the characters for shiqing and kaoshi will often be produced on the first try.



丙. Writing

1. Writing in the age of word processors

Just as in English it is possible to read well without being able to spell every word from memory, so in Chinese it is possible to read without being able to write every character from memory. And in fact, with the advent of Chinese word processing, it is possible to write without being able to produce every character from memory, too; for in a typical word processing program, the two steps in composing a character text are, first, to input *pinyin* and, second, to confirm the output character or to select a correct one from a set of homonyms (ordered by frequency).

There is, nevertheless, still a strong case to be made for the beginning student learning to write characters by hand. First of all, there is the aesthetic experience. In the Chinese world, calligraphy – beautiful writing, writing beautifully -- is valued not only as art, but also as moral training. Even if your handwriting never reaches museum quality, the tactile experience and discipline of using a writing implement on paper (or even on a tablet computer) is valuable. Writing also serves a pedagogical function: it forces you to pay attention to details. Characters are often distinguished by no more than a single, short stroke:

4 strokes	天	夭	夫	犬	太
	tiān	yāo	fū	quǎn	tài
	sky	goblin	person	dog	grand
5 strokes	白	申	田	甲	由
	bái	shēn	tián	jiǎ	yóu
	white	explain	field	'A'	from

Finally, aesthetics and pedagogy aside, there are still occasions where even non-advanced students need to write by hand: giving personal information, taking notes, or writing personal correspondence. Learning to write all characters as they are encountered from memory can be done (and many students of early generations learned this way); but it inevitably results in slowing down progress in other skills, such as reading and conversation. To be sure, children in school in China do spend a lot of time learning to write characters from memory, over-learning to the point that writing becomes second nature; but even if they don't always speak Mandarin as their first language, they already speak Chinese and they have lived all their lives in a context where characters are ubiquitous, so they can afford to spend a great deal of time perfecting their writing. For learners who do not already speak the language, there is room for the moderate approach adopted in this book: while continuing to forge ahead with conversational (*pinyin*) and

reading material (*pinyin* and characters), we will focus on a restricted set of characters for writing purposes. The goal is to learn the principles of writing so that any character can be reproduced by copying; and to internalize a smaller set that can be written from memory. The latter set can provide a core of representative graphs and frequently encountered characters for future calligraphic endeavors.

2. Principles of drawing characters

Strokes are called bǐhuà(r) in Chinese. Stroke order (bǐshùn) is important for aesthetic reasons - characters often do not look right if the stroke order is not followed. Following correct stroke order also helps learning, for in addition to visual memory for characters, people develop a useful tactile memory for them by following a consistent stroke order.

a) Form

There are usually said to be eight basic strokes plus a number of composites. They are shown below, with names for each stroke and examples of characters that contain them.

héng ‘horizontal’

一

shù ‘vertical’

十

piě ‘cast aside’ ie
leftwards slanting

人

nà ‘pressing down’
ie rightwards slanting

入

tiǎo ‘poking up’ ie
rightward rising

冷挑

diǎn ‘dot’

小 熱

gōu ‘hook’

小心 弋 买

zhé ‘bend’

马 凸

[four variants, shown]

[many variants]

Composite strokes can be analyzed in terms of these eight, eg ‘horizontal plus leftwards slant’.

b) Direction

In most cases, strokes are falling (or horizontal); only one of the eight primary strokes rises - the one called tiǎo.

c) Order

The general rules for the ordering of strokes are given below. These rules are not detailed enough to generate word order for you, but they will help you to make sense of the order, and to recall it more easily. Begin here by drawing the characters shown below as you contemplate each of the rules, and recite the names of the strokes:

i) Horizontal (<u>héng</u>) before vertical (<u>shù</u>):	shí	10	十
ii) Except a closing <u>héng</u> is often postponed till last:	wáng	king; <i>surname</i>	王
	tǔ	soil	土
iii) Left before right	bā	8	八
(eg <u>piě</u> before <u>nà</u>)	rén	person	人
	mù	wood	木
iv) Top before bottom:	sān	3	三
	yán	speech	言
v) Left constituent before right: (eg <u>±</u> before <u>也</u>)	dì	place	地
vi) Frame before innards:	yuè	moon; month	月
	zhōu	cycle; week, <i>surname</i>	周
vii) Boxes are drawn in 3 strokes: the left vertical, then top and right, ending with bottom (left to right):	kǒu	mouth	口
viii) Frames are closed last, after innards:	sì	4	四
	rì	sun; day	日
	tián	field	田

ix) For symmetrical parts, dominant

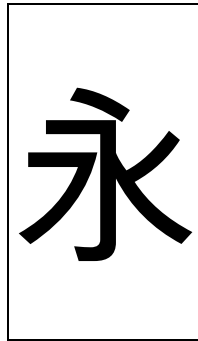
precedes minor:

xiǎo small

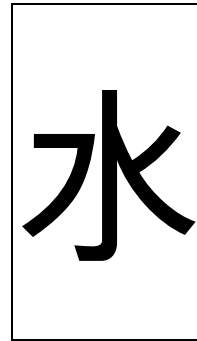
小

d) Two illustrative characters

Because of the symmetry of its form as well as the gravity of its meaning, the character that represents the root yǒng, whose basic meaning is ‘everlasting’, is often used as an illustration of the 8 basic strokes. Actually, yǒng is composed of only 5 strokes, but some of the 5 can illustrate several strokes simultaneously. Also cited is the more common character for shuǐ, ‘water’, which is similar in form.



yǒng
eternal



shuǐ
water

Find out the way these characters are written from a teacher (or from your flashCube links), then see if you can follow the analysis of yǒng into the 8 basic strokes by overlaying each stroke in the following set in red ink:



PART II

甲. Presentation

a) Each character is introduced in large format, with two numbers (see #c below), pronunciation and a rough meaning provided beneath.

b) For characters with two forms, a simplified and a traditional, both forms are given, with the traditional form above and the simplified form below.

c) Because of the difficulty of indicating the order of strokes without providing hand-drawn characters, students are asked to seek information on stroke-order from their teachers, or from flashCube links where possible. Some indication of the constituency of characters, as well as the number of strokes needed to draw them, is provided by the two numbers underneath each large format character. These give, first, the number of strokes of the ‘radical’ assigned to the character (radicals are discussed in lesson B part II) and second, the number of strokes in addition to the radical. (The sum of the two numbers is the total.) Where the second number is 0 (eg: 長 8+0), the character is itself a radical. In some cases, characters that have only one form have been assigned different radicals in the simplified set; 弟 dì ‘younger brother’, for example, is assigned the radical 弓 in the traditional set (ie 3+4), but 人 (the first two strokes) in the simplified (ie 2+5). In such cases, both numbers are given, with the traditional radical assignment first.

d) Reading practice is provided first in the form of compound words and phrase, then in various types of contextualized material, such as short dialogues, paragraphs, charts and tables. Students should practice these on their own so that classroom reading activities can proceed with facility.

e) Separate reading materials are provided for both traditional and simplified characters. The former would normally be written vertically, but for reasons of practicality, they too are presented in horizontal format.

f) Occasionally new characters which have not been formally introduced in the lessons are included in texts on the assumption that they can be identified in context. Such material is underlined.

g) The writing exercises may be done by hand, or on a word-processor. Teachers may differ on policy about whether to write simplified, traditional or both. One position is to allow learners to choose one or the other, but to require consistency – no switching within a text just to avoid complicated characters! Regardless of writing choice, learners should learn to read both types.

h) The large format characters are intended for writing practice. Teachers may differ in their requirements. A minimal requirement would be to learn to write them correctly, and to practice them to the point that they can be produced with confidence on class and homework assignments.

i) Because written language serves different functions from spoken, it is not surprising to find some material specialized for written functions. In Chinese, this includes particular words, grammatical patterns, and most frequently, the use of truncated compounds (eg 已 alone, rather than the full compound, 已經 yǐjīng ‘already’). Such forms will be noted as encountered.

乙. Numbers

一 二 三 四 五

1+0
yī

2+0
èr

1+2
sān

3+2
sì

1+3
wǔ

六 七 八 九 十

2+2
liù

1+1
qī

2+0
bā

1+1
jiǔ

2+0
shí

Notes

The graphs for 1–3 are obviously representational. The near left-right symmetry of the graphs for 4, 6, 8, and 10 is not entirely coincident. 四 seems to have represented a whole easily divided into two parts; 六's earlier form looked very like that of 四 (with 六's two legs matching the two inner strokes of 四). 八 (to be distinguished from 人 rén 'person' and 入 rù 'enter') also represented the notion of division (into two fours), and 十 represented unity of the four directions and the center. Lower multiples of 10 are sometimes represented as unit characters: 廿 '20' and 卅 '30'. However, they are still (usually) read as if written 二十 and 三十.

Exercise 1. 九九乘法表 jiǔjiǔ chéngfǎbiǎo '9[x]9 multiplication-table'

Read the following multiplications tables aloud. [When the product is only a single digit, the rhythm is preserved by adding 得 dé 'gets'; for similar reasons, the teens are recited as yīshí'èr, etc. rather than just shí'èr.]

一三得三

一五得五

一九得九

二三得六

二五得十

二九一十八

三三得九

三五一十五

三九二十七

四三十二	四五二十	四九三十六
五三一十五	五五二十五	五九四十五
六三一十八	六五三十	六九五十四
七三二十一	七五三十五	七九六十三
八三二十四	八五四十	八九七十二
九三二十七	九五四十五	九九八十一

丙. Dates

In lesson 1, you learned the units nián ‘year’, yuè ‘month’ and hào ‘day’ so that you could recite dates. It turns out that dates are usually *written* with rì ‘sun; day’ rather than hào, and can be recited as written, with rì.

年 月 日

1+5	4+0	4+0
nián	yuè	rì
year	month	day

Notes

The characters used for yuè and rì are representational, being squared off versions of what were originally drawings of the moon and sun. Nián, on the other hand, is not obviously representational. A nonsense etymology: ‘a year contains four seasons; the first stroke (piě) stands for the winter, the horizontal strokes (héng) are the growing and harvesting seasons (spring, summer and autumn); the short fourth stroke (nà) marks the harvest, and the vertical (shù) representing the continuity of the year.’ Imaginative stories (whether etymologically relevant or not) are a useful way of getting a foothold on the form of characters at the early stages of learning.

Dates are frequently written using Arabic numerals, as in these examples taken from the banners of Mainland newspapers:

1999 年 7 月 26 日

2002 年 2 月 11 日

1998 年 5 月 7 日

Interestingly, it is often the traditional, ‘lunar calendar’ dates that are written out in full, with the numbers also represented in Chinese characters. The Chinese lunar calendar consists of 12 months of 29 to 30 days, plus intercalary months inserted every few years to make up the difference. The lunar new year begins some weeks after the solar one. Lunar years are counted in cycles of 60, which exhausts all combinations of a set of 10 ‘stems’ and 12 ‘branches’ (ie 1-1, 1-2 ... 1-11, 1-12, 2-1 ... 10-12, for a total of 60). Though the first lunar month has a special name, the rest are all written with yuè; rì is usually left out of lunar dates. The correspondence is as follows:

International dating: 1999 年 7 月 26 日

Traditional Chinese: 己卯 年七月 二十六
jǐ-mǎo

Most headline banners give dates in both forms. But even in traditional dates, zero líng is usually written as 〇 rather than with the character 零.

Exercise 2

Following the examples, try writing out the dates in the boxes provided; then read them all aloud (with the day as hào or rì).

一九九九年 七月 二十六日

二〇〇二年 二月 十一日

November 23, 1949

April 18, 2003

February 15, 1994

October 19, 2001

丁. Days

今天 昨天 明天

2+2 3+1
jīntiān
today

4+5
zuótiān
yesterday

4+4
míngtiān
tomorrow

Notes

天tiān has the root meaning of ‘sky; day’, and it is said to be based on a drawing that represented the sky above the earth. 明míng, composed of the characters for ‘sun’ and ‘moon’, appears in compounds with the meaning ‘bright’, so ‘a bright tomorrow’. Neither 今jīn- nor 昨zuó- are obviously representational, so you will have to try to account for their form on your own.

Exercise 3

The list of dates below [which could be from diary entries] is out of order. Read the entries in numerical order, beginning with the number:

七:	今天	四月	二十日
三:	昨天	九月	三十八日
六:	明天	三月	四日
二:	昨天	十二月	十七日
九:	今天	八月	二日
一:	明天	五月	十日
四:	今天	九月	二十五日
五:	明天	十一月	三十日
八:	昨天	六月	十四日
十:	今天	二月	九日

戊. Surnames

王 李 毛 周 白 林

4+0	4+3	4+0	2+6	5+0	4+4
Wáng	Lǐ	Máo	Zhōu	Bái	Lín
<i>king</i>	<i>plum</i>	<i>fine hair</i>	<i>circle</i>	<i>white</i>	<i>woods</i>

The characters used for these six surnames also represent words whose meanings are only very tangentially related to their surname functions.

Exercise 4.

The following list is out of numerical order. Read it in order, and following the information given, read out the surname and the birthday (shēngri), along the following lines:

Dì-yī: <tā> xìng Wáng; <shēngri ne:> yī-jiǔ-bā-èr nián, yīyuè sì rì.

六： 王；1946年8月23日
八： 李；1981年6月8日
三： 毛；1979年10月29日
九： 周；1966年2月30日
十： 白；1961年10月2日
十一： 林；1942年8月17日
二： 毛；1983年4月14日
一： 王；1982年1月4日
十二： 周；1976年11月21日
四： 白；1959年9月21日
七： 林；1967年3月16日
五： 李；1951年11月7日

A follow-up conversation could be colloquial:

Cue: Dì-yī ne?

Response: Dì-yī: Wáng xiānshēng; shēngri: yī-jiǔ-bā-èr nián, yīyuè sì hào.

己. Observations

Chén (1999: 157) gives an average stroke number of 11.2 for the 2000 most common traditional characters. The most complicated character in this lesson, the 昨 of 昨天, has only 9, so it is not surprising to find that none of the characters introduced in this lesson has a simplified form in addition to the traditional one. So these texts and exercises would appear the same regardless of which Chinese community they originated in.

The lesson does contain examples of compound characters – those whose immediate constituents are also potentially characters. The most obvious example is 明 míng, composed of 日 and 月. But 昨 zuó (日 + 乍), 林 lín (木+木), 李 lǐ (木 + 子 arranged vertically) and 周 zhōu (with inner element 吉) are also compound. The origin and significance of compound characters will be discussed in lesson B.

Exercise 5. Writing

Compose a table with 5 surnames, number them, and indicate the day of arrival (today, yesterday etc.) and the date they are leaving (over the course of this year or the next few).

#	surname	day arriving	date leaving
一	王	今天	2005 年五月八日