

# 汉字 HànZì Chinese Characters

04

## Origin of hanzi

Original character to simplified one



There are six categories of Chinese characters: pictographs, pictophonetic characters, associative compounds, self-explanatory characters, phonetic loan characters and mutually explanatory characters. Here we only introduce the common four categories, because the other two categories are not widely used.

#### 1. Pictographs

Some Chinese characters were created from pictures of real things, like

"kŏu □ mouth."









"mù木 tree"







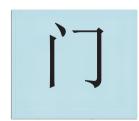


"mén 门 door"











#### "mă ∃ horse"









#### 2. Picto-phonetic characters

Picto-phonetic characters are made from a radical and another component.

Picto-phonetic characters can be divided into 8 types. The most common type is "left radical right phonetic." The left part of the Chinese character is a radical; it shows you the possible meaning this Chinese character might be related to, and from the right part, you can guess how to read/pronounce the Chinese character or the sound of the character to a certain extent.

For example: 青 (qīng - green grass), 请 (qǐng - request), 情 (qíng - feeling)

远 (yuǎn - far away), 元 (yuán - currency unit/Chiense yuan), 院 (yuàn - courtyard, compound)

Like "ma 吗 a question word"

The left part is a radical, "kŏu  $\square$  mouth;" you need to ask questions by mouth, so the left part shows you the possible meaning, and the pronunciation of the right part "mǎ  $\square$  horse" is similar with "ma  $\square$  a question word."

"mā 妈 mother"

The left side is a radical, "nǚ 女 female" shows the meaning; the right side shows the phonetic, because "mǎ 号 horse" and "mā 妈 mother" have similar pronunciations.

#### 3. Associative compounds

These Chinese characters can be divided into two parts: One part is about figure, the other part is about meaning.

For example: in "xiū 休 rest," the left part is the radical indicating person, the right part means tree; it's like a man leaning against a tree.

"dàn  $\square$  daybreak, dawn,", the upper part is "rì  $\square$  the sun," and the lower part is like the horizontal line; when the sun rises from the horizon line it's daybreak.

"nán 男 male, man," the upper part is "tián 田 farm field," the lower part is "lì 力 strength," for people who work in the field with strength are men.

### 4. Self-explanatory characters

These types of Chinese characters are not convenient to be drawn as a concrete



image, so they are shown by a single abstract symbol, line, or a pictograph and an abstract symbol.

For example: " $y\bar{\imath}$  — one," " $\dot{e}r$   $\equiv$  two," " $s\bar{a}n$   $\equiv$  three," one line represents the number "one," two abstract lines are just the abstract image of two things, and so is three.

"shàng  $\perp$ , on, up," the short line shows the position; it's up the long line "xià  $\overline{\Gamma}$ , down, below,"the short line is below the long line.



Like "xiōng ⊠ deadly trap"

U = U (cupped pit) + X (crossed thorn)when people fell into a trap or pit, the scared feeling and the bad situation is just represented by "X"

It is not that every Chinese character can be classified into a certain category, because they have experienced a long-term process of evolution. However, knowing the principles of making Chinese characters can help in memorizing easily and learn it with fun.

| Stroke        | Direction | Name    | In Context   |  |  |  |
|---------------|-----------|---------|--------------|--|--|--|
| `             | ~         | diǎn    | 你字           |  |  |  |
|               | <b>→</b>  | héng    | 言 天 甚        |  |  |  |
| l             | <b>\</b>  | shù     | 到 田 甚        |  |  |  |
| )             |           | piě     | 你 禾 字<br>天 禾 |  |  |  |
| (             | ¥         | nà      |              |  |  |  |
| /             | 1         | tí      | 我            |  |  |  |
| $\overline{}$ |           | hénggōu | 字 爱          |  |  |  |
|               | 7         | shùgōu  | 小 到 你        |  |  |  |
| ackslash      | V         | xiégōu  | 我 戈          |  |  |  |
|               |           | héngzhé | 回要           |  |  |  |
| L             | Ly.       | shùzhé  | 忙甚           |  |  |  |

**Basic Strokes of Chinese Language** 

#### Stroke order

Each character is composed of various strokes. There are 11 basic strokes. A character may have one stroke or multiple numbers of strokes. Every character has



fixed number of strokes and for writing the character, a sequence is followed which is called as stroke order. There are certain rules for stroke order which are as follows:

| Rule  | Example | Meaning       |
|---|---------|---------------|
| 1. First Horizontal, then Vertical                | +       | shí = ten     |
| 2. First Left, then right                         | 人       | rén = person  |
| 3. From top to bottom                             | 三       | sān = three   |
| 4. From left to right                             | 儿       | ér = child    |
| 5. From outside to inside                         | 间       | jiān = middle |
| 6. First fill in the inside and then close (seal) | 国       | guó = country |
| 7. Middle first then left and right               | 小       | xiăo = small  |

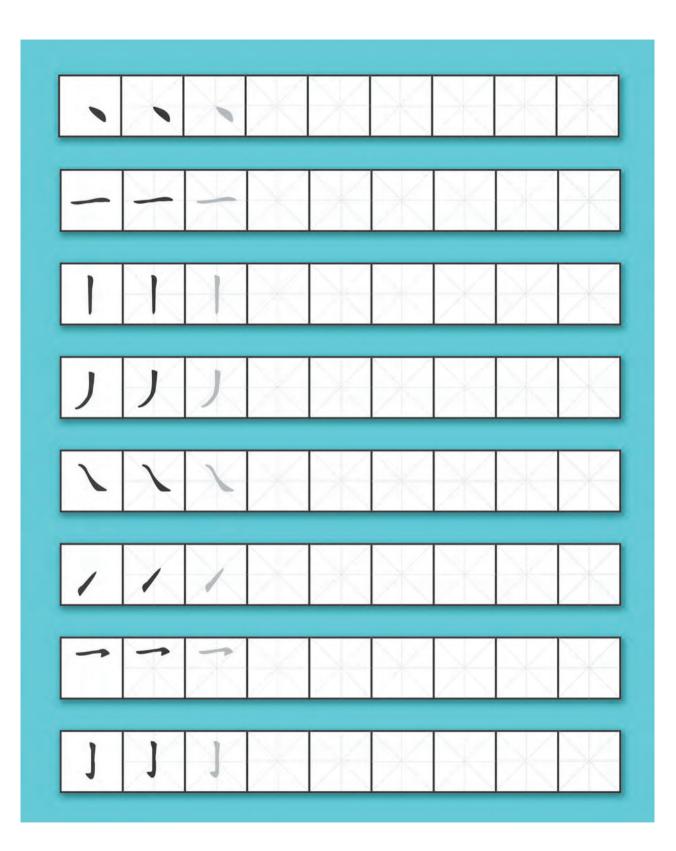
#### A Chinese Radical

Every Chinese character has a radical. A Chinese radical (部首- bùshǒu - literally: "section header") is a graphical component of a Chinese character under which the character is traditionally listed in a Chinese dictionary. A radical has several functions: It allows you to search a character in a dictionary, it may give hint about the meaning of the character and it may even suggest the pronunciation! There are around 214 radicals.

| 练习     | Liànxí | • | B |
|--------|--------|---|---|
| 2/31-7 | Liana  | • |   |

| 1. | Recogni  | se the | followi  | ng b  | asic | Radica | ls and  | write   | meaning                                 | in | English. |
|----|----------|--------|----------|-------|------|--------|---------|---------|---|----|----------|
|    | 人        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         | • |    |          |
|    | 儿        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 日        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 月        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 手        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    |          |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | Щ        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 大        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 小\       |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | I        |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
| 2. | Write a  | pprop  | riate ra | dical | for  | the fo | llowing | g Engli | sh words                                | :  |          |
|    | 1. Water |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 2. Ice   |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 3. Grass |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 4. Soil  |        |          |       |      |        |         |         |   |    |          |
|    | 5. Door  |        |          |       |      |        |         |         | ••••                                    |    |          |
|    |          |        |          |       | \ \  | W.     |         | al .    |   |    |          |

# **Chines Stroke**









Picasso, the world famous master of art, once expressed that "If I once lived in China, I must had become a calligrapher rather than a painter". Calligraphy is one of the unique and traditional arts of China. Chinese calligraphy has a long history of about 1000 years. Chinese calligraphy mainly has five categories i.e. seal script, official script, formal script, running script and cursive script.



