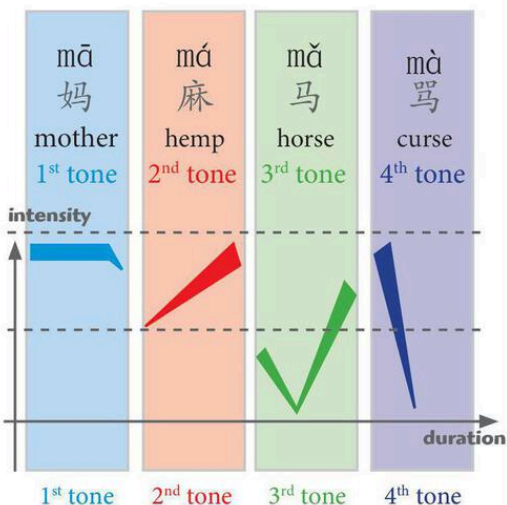
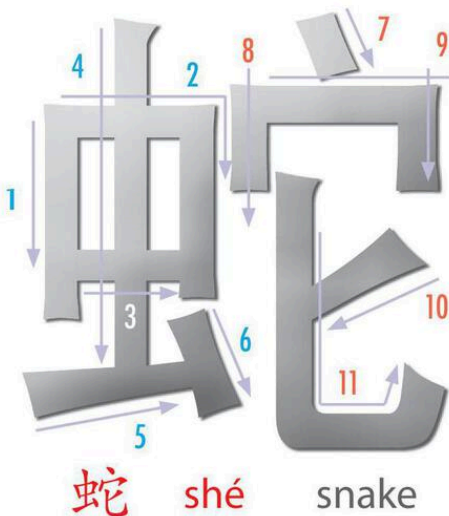


The fundamentals of the CHINESE LANGUAGE

level 1: writing and pronunciation



CHARACTER	ANCIENT FORM	MEANING
相		Appearance / portrait/ to examine
心		Heart / spirit (thought)
想		To think / to believe



我的名字是王冰。我是西方人，十一月七日来了中国。中国是一个好地方，东西很好吃，中国人也很友好。我住在西安。西安的小吃很有名，不过冬天太冷了。

gè	yī	nèi	guǎng
dà	èr	duō	yáng
hái	sān	tǔ	zhàn

The
Fundamentals
of the
Chinese Language

—

Writing & Pronunciation

Discovery Publisher

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PREFACE

The Fundamentals of the Chinese Language is a shortcut to the Chinese written language, not a text book nor a conventional phrase book. Its purpose is to help non-Chinese enjoy the Chinese “Sign Language” that has been developing for 4,000 years. Until the 20th century, it was a language known only to a small minority of Chinese. Few foreigners, unless they were dedicated students, have ever had the courage, tenacity and determination to tackle this language.

Today, most foreign students of the Chinese written language are faced with sentences which are not suited for “first steps”. Teachers try to teach beginners both the spoken language and the written language. For example, the phrase: “I am English”, which is romanized as “wǒ shì yīng guó rén” (我是英国人.) “Wǒ” is written “我” and has 7 strokes; “yīng” is written “英” and has 8 strokes, etc. However, none of these details provide any explanation of use to a beginner.

Long before I had completed my Chinese studies, I discovered a host of useful explanations and tips which could have expedited my studies. This hard-won knowledge forms the basis for this book. I hope readers will derive as much pleasure from learning something of this venerable language as members of my family have over the last half century.

The idea behind this book was born over sixty years ago when I was studying Chinese in Macau. Since my first teacher spoke no English, I had to learn, as a Chinese child would, by endless practice. The three “P” method (Practice, Practice and more Practice) was an excellent way to develop calligraphy but an inefficient way for an adult to learn. There

are many books on this subject, but none have addressed it in the spirit of a wish to help an enthusiastic beginner make a quick, painless entry into the delights of the Chinese written language.

I have frequently tested my theory, so I know that our method works. My daughter Fiona who, because she suffers from Down's Syndrome, was a slow learner, acquired 150 words of written Chinese more quickly than she learned the English alphabet. I have often practiced on fellow British visitors to China, and enjoyed their excitement as they recognized their newly learned Chinese “characters” wherever they went.

We intend to show that, although mastering the Chinese written language may take a lifetime, an understanding of the basics can be grasped in an afternoon, enabling visitors to become at least “partially sighted” as they move around China and Overseas Chinese communities throughout the world.

Although this book is not a text book, we have sprinkled it with tests in order to assist the learning process so that you can, if you wish, review and check your progress. However, it does not pretend to be an academic book. It is no more than an introduction to a fascinating language. An expanded academic version, festooned with footnotes, may follow, but this book has a totally different purpose.

Brian Stewart

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WORD	
鼻子	Nose
桌子	Table

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口 刀 力
 士 夕 夕
 己 巾 干

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Before you get started...

Before you get started, it might be a good idea to have with you:



168 blank index cards or 3x5 note cards; one for each character





A pen



A Chinese-English dictionary

LESSON ONE



Definition	One, single, a (article), as soon as, entire, all
Character Evolution	
Stroke Order	
Chinese Proverb	一见钟情

JUMPING IN AT THE SHALLOW END

You most probably already know the following 3 Chinese characters:

- One 一
- Two 二
- Three 三

Number “ten” 十 is also easy to remember. It is a stroke on a “tally stick”, marking the passage of ten objects which are being moved in the course of trade.

It is important to start writing immediately. Ideally, you should learn using a brush, which will discourage you from writing strokes in the wrong direction. Also brushes and ink are cheap, and calligraphy is a satisfying pastime. But whatever you use, **practice**.

Most characters are written from the top left corner with the first stroke flowing to the right or downwards:

- One 一 stroke direction →
- Two 二 stroke direction → →
- Three 三 stroke direction → → →
- Ten 十 stroke direction → ↓

There are exceptions, but they are few, and certainly no character is written starting from the bottom right hand corner. Each lesson will show you how to write newly introduced characters and will

give you an opportunity to practice.

You will see in the table below we are concerned, as we are throughout, with the composition of the character and its meaning.

Do not worry about the sounds of these symbols. For the present our concern is only with the structure of the characters¹ not the sounds, which will be discussed later.

Give it a try now!

#	Learn how to write your first 4 Chinese characters									
1	一	一								
2	二	二	二							
3	三	三	三	三						
4	十	十	十							

1	一									
2	二									
3	三									
10	十									

1. Throughout the following lessons, we indicate both sets of Chinese characters, the traditional and the simplified sets. The traditional set is marked with “(t: …)” (see “Simplified and Traditional Chinese” on page 46 for more information on simplified and traditional Chinese sets of characters.)

LIST OF CHINESE CHARACTERS #1 - #27

INTRODUCTION

The characters introduced here will be the pillar of a strong foundation on which we will keep building upon throughout the lessons in this book. First, let us study characters that have similar patterns.

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
5	人	Man / person / people	Outline sketch of a body and two legs; a sort of matchstick man
6	个	Individual / this / that / size / classifier for people or objects in general	Pictograph of a bamboo shoot, or the number one (t: 個)
7	大	Big / huge / large / major / great / wide / deep / oldest / eldest	A person with arms outstretched
8	太	Highest / greatest / too (much) / very / extremely	Big 大 (character #7) with an extra dot for emphasis
9	天	Day / sky / heaven	Heaven is the biggest thing any person (character #7) can see
10	从	From / follow / via / passing through / through (a gap) / past / ever	Two people following each other (t: 從)
11	内	Inside / inner / internal / within / interior	A person inside something

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
12	肉	Meat / flesh / pulp (of a fruit)	Carcass cut open
13	土	Earth / dust / clay / local / indigenous / unsophisticated	A plant sprouting up through the sub- soil and top soil
14	坐	To sit / to take a seat / to take (a bus, airplane, etc.)	Two men on the ground
15	广	Wide / numerous / to spread	A half-sided large room; a shelter (t: 廣)
16	座	Seat / base / stand	Two people sit in a room (characters #14 and #15)
17	占	To take possession of / to occupy / to constitute / to make up / to account for	A word from someone's mouth
18	点	Drop (of liquid) / point / o'clock / a little / classifier for small indeterminate quantities	Object "standing" (character #17) on a fire, therefore becoming smaller or several (t: 點)
19	店	Inn / shop / store	Standing (character #17) under a shelter (character #15); a store
20	床	Bed / couch / classifier for beds	Wood (character #28) under a shelter (character #15) that makes a bed
21	去	To go / to remove / just passed or elapsed	A person (character #5) (altered) leaving a hole (altered), suggesting motion

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
22	在	Located at / to be in / to exist / in the middle of doing sth	A pictograph of a grass root sprouting from earth (character #13)
23	王	King / best or strongest of its type / grand / great	A line above the earth (character #13); an overlord on top of his territory; a king
24	主	Owner or master / host / primary	Pictograph of a king (character #23) with a flame on top
25	住	To live / to dwell / to stay / to reside / to stop	A person still like a master (character #24); to stay
26	国	Country / nation / state / national	A region encompassed (t: 國); now a "jade" inside a boundary
27	因	Cause / reason / because	Outside is a form of boundary including a fence or wall or even a national frontier, this is a radical (will be studied later), inside is a man; a man and his surrounding

Table 1: List of Chinese characters #1 - #27

PRACTICE

Practice, Practice and Practice. Try to find time to practice writing these first 27 characters we have studied so far. The table below shows the order and direction of the strokes for each of the characters presented in Lesson One.

人	丿	人								
个	㇏	个								

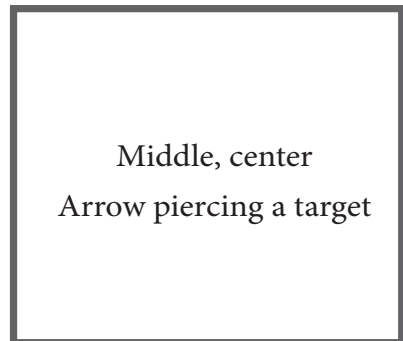
大	一	ナ	大							
太	大	太								
天	一	二	天	天						
从	人	人	从	从						
内	丨	冂	内	内						
肉	肉	肉	肉							
土	一	十	土							
坐	人	人	从	坐	坐	坐				
广	丶	宀	广							
座	广	座								
占	丨	卜	占	占	占					
点	占	点	点	点	点					
店	广	店								
床	广	床	床	床	床					
去	土	去	去							
在	一	ナ	在	在						
王	一	二	王	王						
主	丶	主								
住	人	住	住							
国	丨	冂	国	国	国					

因	冂	因	因							
一	一									
二	一	二								
三	一	=	三							
十	一	十								

If you have a Chinese friend to check your work, so much the better, but careful copying should produce effective results. The more often you write, the more fluid and presentable your characters will be.

We suggest that you write every character you encounter in this book on a card; Chinese writing on one side and the meaning on the other, so that you begin to build a small “dictionary” of cards to which you can add through life. This is a time honored system used by students of Chinese. It has the advantage that the pack can be shuffled and carried in your pocket.

Sample card for 中 (character #151)
















It is suggested that large cards, should be used to leave plenty of room for further notes¹.










LESSON ONE: TEST 1


In the table below, without looking at what we have just studied, write each Chinese character according to its meaning.

1. Memory techniques (“memoria technica”): it is not essential that the student should slavishly adhere to the remarks in Column 4 in the above table (“Description & Explanation”). Any trick will do: it does not matter whether or not the memoria technica has been legitimized by scholars. The only thing that matter is that each new unit under scrutiny should somehow become firmly lodged in the student’s memory. The ambitious student may wish to compete with Father Ricci, the Jesuit in the 18th century, who after decades could astonish the Mandarins with his encyclopaedic knowledge and memory tricks. We lesser mortals can be content if we can lodge a few thousand Chinese characters in our “memory box”. It is an interesting hobby for life, which can give at least as much satisfaction to addicts as crossword puzzles.

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
5		Man / person / people	Outline sketch of a body and two legs; a sort of matchstick man
6		Individual / this / that / size / classifier for people or objects in general	Pictograph of a bamboo shoot, or the number one (t: 個)
7		Big / huge / large / major / great / wide / deep / oldest / eldest	A person with arms outstretched
8		Highest / greatest / too (much) / very / extremely	Big 大 (character #7) with an extra dot for emphasis

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
9		Day / sky / heaven	Heaven is the biggest thing any person (character #7) can see
10		From / follow / via / passing through / through (a gap) / past / ever	Two people following each other (t: 從)
11		Inside / inner / internal / within / interior	A person inside something
12		Meat / flesh / pulp (of a fruit)	Carcass cut open
13		Earth / dust / clay / local / indigenous / unsophisticated	A plant sprouting up through the sub-soil and top soil
14		To sit / to take a seat / to take (a bus, airplane, etc.)	Two men on the ground
15		Wide / numerous / to spread	A half-sided large room; a shelter (t: 廣)
16		Seat / base / stand	Two people sit in a room (characters #14 and #15)
17		To take possession of / to occupy / to constitute / to make up / to account for	A word from someone's mouth

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
18		Drop (of liquid) / point / o'clock / a little / classifier for small indeterminate quantities	Object "standing" (character #17) on a fire, therefore becoming smaller or several (t: 點)
19		Inn / shop / store	Standing (character #17) under a shelter (character #15); a store
20		Bed / couch / classifier for beds	Wood (character #28) under a shelter (character #15) that makes a bed
21		To go / to remove / just passed or elapsed	A person (character #5) (altered) leaving a hole (altered), suggesting motion
22		Located at / to be in / to exist / in the middle of doing sth	A pictograph of a grass root sprouting from earth (character #13)
23		King / best or strongest of its type / grand / great	A line above the earth (character #13); an overlord on top of his territory; a king
24		Owner or master / host / primary	Pictograph of a king (character #23) with a flame on top
25		To live / to dwell / to stay / to reside / to stop	A person still like a master (character #24); to stay
26		Country / nation / state / national	A region encompassed (t: 國); now a "jade" inside a boundary

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
27		Cause / reason / because	Outside is a form of boundary including a fence or wall or even a national frontier, this is a radical (will be studied later), inside is a man; a man and his surrounding

LESSON ONE: TEST 2

In the table below, without looking at what we have just studied, write the meaning of each Chinese character.

#	CHARACTER	MEANING	DESCRIPTION & EXPLANATION
5	人		Outline sketch of a body and two legs; a sort of matchstick man
6	个		Pictograph of a bamboo shoot, or the number one (t: 個)
7	大		A person with arms outstretched
8	太		Big 大 (character #7) with an extra dot for emphasis
9	天		Heaven is the biggest thing any person (character #7) can see



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