



Chinese Calligraphy and Culture 中國書法與文化

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An Easy-to-Use Guide for Learners of All Ages

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Timeline of Chinese Dynasties and Some Key Events

ca. 2100-1600 BC	Xia Dynasty	
ca. 1600-1050 BC	Shang Dynasty	Capitals: near present-day Zhengzhou and Anyang
ca. 1046-256 BC	Zhou Dynasty	Capitals: Hao (near present-day Xi'an) and Luoyang
	Western Zhou (ca. 1046-771 BC)	
	Eastern Zhou (ca. 771-256 BC)	Spring and Autumn Period (770-ca. 475 BC)
		Confucius (ca. 551-479 BC)
		Warring States Period (ca. 475-221 BC)
221-206 BC	Qin Dynasty	
206 BC-220 AD	Han Dynasty	
	Western/Former Han (206 BC-9 AD)	
	Eastern/Later Han (25-220)	
220-589	Six Dynasties Period	Period of disunity and instability following the fall of the Han
	Three Kingdoms (220-265)	Wei, Shu, and Wu
	Jin Dynasty (265-420)	
	Period of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (386-589)	
581-618	Sui Dynasty	
618-906	Tang Dynasty	
907-960	Five Dynasties Period	
960-1279	Song (Sung) Dynasty	
	Northern Song (960-1127)	
	Southern Song (1127-1279)	
1279-1368	Yuan Dynasty	The reign of the Mongol Empire
1368-1644	Ming Dynasty	
1644-1912	Qing Dynasty	Reign of the Manchus
1912-1949	Republic of China	
1949-present	People's Republic of China	

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HUIWEN LI (李惠文) AND YUEMING YU (于月明)

AN OVERVIEW OF CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

Chinese calligraphy, 书法¹/書法²/Shū Fǎ³, is defined by *Cihai* (辞海, an authoritative, comprehensive Chinese dictionary) as “用毛笔书写篆、隶、正、行、草各体汉字的艺术” (the art of writing stylistic scripts of Chinese characters including the seal, clerical, regular, running, and cursive scripts, using a Chinese writing brush). It has been widely practiced both in China and elsewhere, and has played a very important role in defining and refining Chinese culture.

Chinese calligraphy “began with the creation of Chinese characters” (Qian & Fang, 2007, p. 100). It has existed in China for at least three thousand years (Li, 2009; Qiu & Mattos, 2000). Before modern pens and computers were invented, calligraphy was used as a primary way of record-keeping and communication. Therefore, it was a key component in people’s daily lives. Starting from the *Han* Dynasty (208 BC-220 AD), as new and different scripts were developed, calligraphers began to study how to write calligraphy more aesthetically and artistically. It was then that calligraphy was first regarded as an art form of writing Chinese. This made people realize and appreciate the aesthetic value of calligraphy.

From the *Sui* Dynasty (581-619 AD) to the *Qing* Dynasty (1644-1911 AD), the Imperial Civil Service Examination System was set up and employed to select knowledgeable and talented individuals for civil services in China. During this long period of Chinese history, calligraphy served as a requisite for all candidates to be qualified for a government position. Therefore, it was widely understood that calligraphy was a crucial course that students and trainees were required to take. As a result, calligraphy became one of the four most important skills (i.e., musical instrument playing, chess playing, calligraphy writing, and painting) when evaluating a person’s scholarship.

To learn calligraphy, one must learn the rules. Over several thousand years, Chinese calligraphy has developed five primary scripts (in Chinese, 篆, 隶, 楷, 行, and 草; in English, seal, clerical, regular, running, and cursive) from Oracle-bone script (in Chinese, 甲骨文), the very first form of written Chinese characters. All these scripts share basic calligraphy rules, although each has its unique appearance. These rules cover stroke writing, component layout, character shaping, composition of the entire work, and others. This makes performing calligraphy writing similar to drawing or painting.

1. Simplified writing form, currently used in mainland China and many other Chinese-speaking countries and regions.
2. Traditional writing form, currently used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, and some other areas.
3. Pinyin, a set of phonetic symbols created in mainland China.

To make or evaluate high-level calligraphy, extra rules were also established. Based on these rules, for example, good calligraphy should be able to express the essence of the content and convey the calligrapher's mental and emotional state. To apply these rules, or in other words, to produce good calligraphy, calligraphers need to apply their technical skills and talents in sizing (of individual strokes, characters, and components), lining, spreading, coloring, coordinating, and (writing) pacing.

From the audience's perspective, however, a piece of calligraphy cannot only be judged by technique and appearance. Another important dimension are hidden insights, which may include the dynamics, rhythm, emotion, and even the calligrapher's personality. The beauty and complexity of Chinese calligraphy has developed this art form to be called “无言之诗、无形之舞、无图之画、无声之乐” (in English, “wordless poetry,” “figureless dance,” “imageless picture,” and “soundless music”) (Liu, 2012). Western scholars have praised Chinese calligraphy for the beauty of an image in painting, the beauty of dynamism in dance, and the beauty of rhythm in music (Guo, 1995). Additionally, calligraphy writing techniques must be based on traditional Chinese philosophical ideas such as the balance between *Yin* and *Yang* from Taoism, and the *Golden Mean* from Confucianism (Qian & Fang). Calligraphy requires additional effort from both the performer and the evaluator, such as *qing* [mood, emotion], *qi* [energy, vital force], *shen* [spirit], *jing* [realm, standing], *yun* [elegance], *fa* [discipline], *yi* [expressiveness], *fengge* [style], and *qidu* [manner] (Ni, 1999) (in Chinese, 情, 气, 神, 精, 韵, 法, 意, 风格, and 气度 respectively). Therefore, Chinese calligraphy is the quintessence of Chinese culture (Chen, 2003).

As time went on, calligraphy fully developed its form by absorbing components from other cultural forms, including the Chinese language, ideas on aesthetics, and philosophy (Qian & Fang). According to Peveto (2010), Chinese calligraphy “began at the dawn of China's history and has continued throughout the centuries to the present, remaining a significant element in Chinese culture.” So “understanding its role in history and society allows a glimpse into China's past and its present” (p. 44). Therefore, by studying and practicing calligraphy, people can learn those components and deepen their understanding of Chinese culture. This is especially true for students of the Chinese language and culture.

In addition to seeking deeper understanding of Chinese culture and enjoying its beauty, people treat calligraphy as a means of developing a good moral code, sound personality, and improved physical and mental health. This benefit is supported by multiple research studies. A longitudinal study conducted by Zhou, Liu, and Sang (2005) showed that calligraphy practice has had a significant positive effect on 13 personality factors such as warmth, reasoning, and emotional stability. In another study these researchers (2009) also found that children with calligraphy experience showed positive emotional intelligence development.

Kao (2006) studied Chinese calligraphic handwriting for health and behavioral therapy. Positive effects were found on multiple dimensions related to health such as (1) cognitive improvements in reasoning,

judgment, facilitation, and hand steadiness in children with mild retardation, and (2) enhanced memory, concentration, spatial orientation, and motor coordination in Alzheimer's patients. Findings also included positive behavioral changes in individuals with autism, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), psychosomatic diseases of hypertension and diabetes, as well as mental diseases of schizophrenia, depression, and neurosis. In addition, practicing Chinese calligraphy is commonly accepted as a contributing factor to longevity. Kwok et al. (2011) investigated the effects of calligraphy therapy and showed that it was effective for enhancing cognitive function in older people with mild impairment. Ni (1999) also reported the benefits of moral development from practicing calligraphy. It is very likely that practicing Chinese calligraphy has additional benefits yet to be discovered.

Chinese calligraphy has not only borne great significance domestically, but also elsewhere especially throughout Asia. In countries such as Japan, Korea, and Singapore, calligraphy is widely practiced and highly valued. In Korea, Chinese was used as the official script until the 19th century even after the invention of Hangul in 1447. Calligraphy is also widely practiced in Japan and has been incorporated into current school curriculum. In the West, Picasso was fascinated by the interplay of Chinese characters, the strength and economy of their construction, and stated, "If I were born Chinese, I would not be a painter but a writer. I'd write my pictures" (Claude Roy, 1956). Additionally, traces of Chinese calligraphy can also be easily recognized in the paintings of another famous European artist, Henri Matisse (Li, 2009). Hence, it can be said that the beauty and significance of Chinese calligraphy has been recognized and appreciated around the world for many years.

Chinese calligraphy is both an historical method for documentation and communication, as well as a form of artistic expression. Its significance in China and across the world has been enormous. It is a great cultural treasure. Both historical and empirical evidence clearly demonstrate a compelling necessity to pass on this knowledge and skill from generation to generation through teaching and training. In UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), different cultures are no longer regarded as national properties, but rather as the common heritage of humanity. To promote an awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity, the declaration encourages all levels of education to take actions on both curriculum design and teacher education.

This book is an attempt to introduce to adult beginners the key points of Chinese calligraphy both as a cultural phenomenon and writing skill. It specifically includes the history of Chinese calligraphy, types of calligraphic script, tools and materials, and writing techniques. For teaching purposes an assignment part is also added. Users can take advantage of it to enhance the effects of teaching and learning. If users intend to know more about Chinese calligraphy, the book lists extended reading materials at the end of each chapter. Regarding teaching, it is suggested that one chapter be completed within four teaching

hours. However, final say is up to each instructor. It is the authors' ultimate hope that users can benefit the most from this publication.

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Introduction to Chinese Scripts and Basic Writing Skills

This chapter will provide an overview of the study of Chinese calligraphy; it will feature the early history, evolution, and formation of Chinese characters; and it will show case proper posture for sitting and standing and, finally, brush-holding techniques.

Part I. Culture

1 Introduction

Calligraphy is much, much more than literally applying brush strokes to paper. It's an infinitely rich form of art that is thousands of years old, with practitioners who, over the centuries, have blended style and form to enrich China's history and culture. In its multiple forms of artistic nuance, calligraphy truly is the gateway to China's "soul." Without an awareness of what calligraphy represents, one's appreciation of China will never be realized fully.

Chinese Calligraphy is known as "the correct way of writing Chinese characters" (and it also refers to the completed piece of calligraphy writing). It came into being before the invention of paper and ink, with etchings known as "oracle bones," that appeared as divine representations on turtle shells and animal bones. As calligraphy evolved, it began to reflect distinctive characteristics of China's dynasties from as early as 1500 BC. As a result, calligraphy is considered in Asian societies the supreme visual art form, even more valued than painting and sculpture, and is ranked alongside poetry as the highest form of self-expression. Amid rapid-fire change in China and elsewhere, its beauty and self-expression resonate among practitioners. It anchors the present to the past.

Calligraphy as an art form has another feature: It reflects the calligrapher's own personality, regardless of age or nationality. Practitioners live across Asia and elsewhere around the world. Keen observers, for example, can follow patterns of characters to discern whether the writer was having a good or bad day.

Requiring day-in day-out discipline to master, calligraphy provides enormous aesthetic and emotional benefits to a practitioner. In this digital age of smartphones, laptops and apps, it conveys traditional

values through the delicate application of brush to paper. It creates a contemplative, relaxed mood – essential for emotional balance and well-being.

2 Formation of Chinese Characters: *Liu Shu* (六书/六書/liù shū) – the Six Methods of Forming Chinese Characters

	Category 1	Category 2	Category 3	Category 4	Category 5	Category 6
Name of Character Type	Pictographs	Indicative Characters	Logical Compound Characters	Semantic-Phonetic Compound Characters	Loan Characters	Transfer Characters
Example Character	日, 月, 木	本, 刃	林, 明	清, 晴	–	–

Table 1: Liu Shu (the Six Forming Chinese Character Categories) and examples

From a study of Chinese history, we know that six patterns, or styles, form the basis of all characters. One authority, cited in *Shuowen* (说文/說文/shuō wén), a Han Dynasty dictionary (206 BC-220 AD) mentions the following:

2.1 Primary Patterns

- Pictograph (象形字/xiàng xíng zì): a character with a semantic element that the ancient Chinese created by “symbolizing” real objects such as animals, plants, and planets. For example:

☉ for the modern character 日 (sun)

☾ for the modern character 月 (moon)

𣎵 for the modern character 木 (tree)

- Indicative Character (指事字/zhǐ shì zì): a character created by adding a stroke — (an indicator) – to a pictogram to indicate a logical, or abstract, term related to the pictogram’s meaning. For example:

Indicative stroke added to the lower part of 𣎵 (木, tree) for the modern character 本 (本, root)

Indicative stroke added to 刀 (刀, knife) for the modern character 刃 (刃, blade)

2.2 Compound Patterns

- Logical Compound Character (会意字/會意字/huì yì zì): a character intended to symbolize logical, or abstract, terms with two pictograms that are combined. For example:

𣏟 (Regular writing: 林) is combined with two trees (𣏟+𣏟) to mean “forest.”

𡗗 (Regular writing: 明) is combined with the sun (☉) and the moon (🌙) to mean “bright.”

- Semantic-Phonetic Compound Character (形声字/形聲字/xíng shēng zì): a character that combines a semantic element, known as a radical, with a phonetic element that indicates proper pronunciation. The radical is typically a modified pictograph. For example:

清 (pronounced *qīng*, meaning “clean and clear water,” that is combined with the semantic radical 氵, meaning “water,” and the phonetic component 青, to be pronounced *qīng*. 晴 (pronounced *qíng*, meaning “clear sky”) is combined with the semantic radical 日, meaning the “sun,” and the phonetic component 青, (pronounced *qīng*) that is similar to the combined character’s pronunciation.

2.3 Transfer Patterns

These are character forms that have been created by borrowing characters with a certain meaning or pronunciation. These forms do not follow one particular character-creation pattern. They are few in number.

- Loan Character (Since it’s not a true method to form characters, it has been omitted in this book).
- Transfer Character (Also not a true method of forming characters, so it, too, has been omitted).

Summary

Four types of Chinese characters can be created with meaningful components:

- a pictograph (such as 日, 月, and 木)
- an indicative character (such as 本 and 刃)
- a logical compound (such as 林 and 明)
- a phonetic-semantic compound character (such as 清 and 晴).

3 Major Styles of Chinese Calligraphy Writing

3.1 Oracle Bone Script (甲骨文, “turtle shell and ox bone script”)

As mentioned, rudimentary script discovered on animal bones or turtle shells, known oracle bone script (甲骨文/jiǎ gǔ wén), is the earliest known form of Chinese writing. It is these inscriptions that were recorded during the last nine kings of the *Shang* Dynasty (商/shāng).

Surprisingly, these later *Shang* oracle-bone writings also reflect a few contemporary characters in a different style cast in bronze. As early examples of Chinese writing, they relate to modern Chinese script.

3.2 Seal Script (篆书/篆書, “seal script”)

This seal script (篆书/篆書/zhuàn shū) dates to the latter half of the 1st millennium BC. Having evolved from a *Zhou* Dynasty (周 zhōu) variant, it became the standard formal of writing during the *Qin* Dynasty (秦 qín). In the subsequent *Han* Dynasty (汉/漢 hàn), it was widely used for engravings and seals, also known as “chops.”

Types of Seal Scripts

In general a seal script can refer to the following: large, or great, seal script (大篆 dà zhuàn) and the lesser, or small, seal script (小篆 xiǎo zhuàn). When referring to a seal script nowadays it's understood to mean the small version.

Unified Small Seal Script

Qin system scripts, found on bronze inscriptions dating to roughly 770 to 250 BC, begin to have a consistent, vertically elongated shape. Scholars believe that during this period script-writing became the national standard. It's a finding the discovery of a wordbook with some 3,300 Chinese characters affirms. Also, this small script is considered the basis for what is known as clerical script.

3.3 Clerical Script (隶书/隸書, “clerical script”)

Even now there is a debate when clerical script, commonly known as “official,” “draft,” or “scribal” script, 隶书/隸書/*lì shū*, came into being. Some believe that it developed during the *Han*. But others, based on recent archaeological discoveries, contend that it was in use well before then.

Clerical script characters appear “flat” in shape in contrast to seal and modern standard script. This latter form tends to be taller. Especially noticeable is the flair writers used in horizontal or downward-diagonal strokes, a distinctive pattern of writing that scholars call “silkworm head and wild goose tail” (蚕头雁尾/*cán tóu yàn wěi*).

What's interesting is that even though some early clerical script is difficult to decipher, some later versions can be mastered. And then there are modernized versions: These examples have late *Han* character traces and are used for dramatic stylistic impact.

3.4 Running Script (行书/行書, “running script”)

Modern handwriting reflects semi-cursive, or “running” script, 行书/行書/*xíngshū*, in that strokes and, in rare instances, characters “run into” each other.

3.5 Cursive Script (草书/草書, “cursive script”)

Cursive, or “sloppy script”, 草书/草書/*cǎoshū*, is a fully or mostly cursive script. To write in this style, a calligrapher does not often lift the brush from a writing surface and, to enhance appearance, modifies and eliminates strokes.

3.6 Regular Script (楷书/楷書, “regular script”)

Regular, or “standard,” script “*kǎishū*” 楷书/楷書/*kǎishū*, came into use toward the end of the *Han* and the maturing of the *Tang* Dynasty. It got its name because each stroke is distinctive. Because of its easy-to-recognize characteristics, beginners study regular script first.

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Brush Holding Techniques

Principle 1. Hold the brush firmly inside an empty palm (See Figure 1).

Principle 2. Move wrist – not the arm – to write.

Principle 3. The smaller the script, the lower point one holds a brush; the less cursive the script, the lower the brush is held.

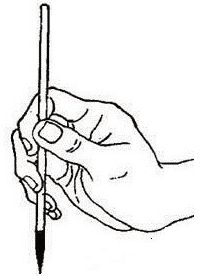


Figure 1: Right way of holding a brush

2 Proper Posture and Brush Positioning

When sitting, follow these tips for proper posture:

- Keep head and neck straight but relaxed.
- Keep shoulders relaxed.
- Keep torso straight.
- Keep feet on the ground.
- Write by twisting or turning the wrist of the writing hand (called wrist-directing technique), and keep the un-writing hand on the table.

When standing, place the un-writing hand on the table to support the the body; the upper body should slightly tilt toward the table.

3 Methods About Where to Place the Wrist of the Writing Hand

Methods, in general, depend on a practitioner's ability to control the brush (when writing) and the size of a character.

Method 1. 枕腕/zhěn wàn: Rest wrist and upper arm on a table. It is typically used to write small characters. Beginners tend to do this.

Method 2. 提腕/tí wàn: Lift wrist with the elbow on the table. It is typically used to write medium-sized characters or by experienced calligraphers.

Method 3. 悬腕/懸腕/xuán wàn: Keep wrist and elbow suspended. It is typically used to write large characters, running or cursive script, or by very experienced calligraphers.

4 Strokes to Compose Characters of Regular Style 楷书/楷書 (the default script for practicing characters in this book)

4.1 Basic Strokes in the Chinese Language

There are 32 types of strokes in regular Chinese character-writing. See Table 2.

序号	笔画	名称	例字	序号	笔画	名称	例字
1	丶	点(diǎn)	广	17	乚	横折弯钩(héng zhé wān gōu)	九
2	一	横(héng)	王	18	㇀	横撇弯钩(héng piě wān gōu)	那
3	丨	竖(shù)	巾	19	㇀	横折折折钩(héng zhé zhé zhé gōu)	奶
4	㇀	撇(piě)	白	20	㇀	竖折折钩(shù zhé zhé gōu)	与
5	㇀	捺(nà)	八	21	㇀	竖弯(shù wān)	四
6	㇀	提(tí)	打	22	㇀	横折(héng zhé)	沿
7	㇀	撇点(piě diǎn)	巡	23	㇀	横折(héng zhé)	口
8	㇀	竖提(shù tí)	农	24	㇀	竖折(shù zhé)	山
9	㇀	横折提(héng zhé tí)	论	25	㇀	撇折(piě zhé)	云
10	㇀	弯钩(wān gōu)	承	26	㇀	横撇(héng piě)	水
11	㇀	竖钩(shù gōu)	小	27	㇀	横折折撇(héng zhé zhé piě)	建
12	㇀	竖弯钩(shù wān gōu)	屯	28	㇀	竖折撇(shù zhé piě)	专
13	㇀	斜钩(xié gōu)	浅	29	㇀	横斜钩(héng xié gōu)	风
14	㇀	卧钩(wò gōu)	心	30	㇀	竖折折(shù zhé zhé)	鼎
15	㇀	横钩(héng gōu)	写	31	㇀	横折折(héng zhé zhé)	凹
16	㇀	横折钩(héng zhé gōu)	月	32	㇀	横折折折(héng zhé zhé zhé)	凸

Table 2: Stroke types in regular writing with names in Pinyin and sample simplified characters

(Adapted from <https://www.wendangwang.com/doc/cda8da205f4743879691d944>.)

Note: The example characters given in Table 2 are the simplified versions even if they have traditional forms.

4.2 Basic calligraphic strokes

In Chinese calligraphy (in regular style, by default) there are multiple ways to write each stroke normally based on where the strokes appear in a character. The horizontal stroke can be written in at least two ways, for example. And the dot stroke may show more forms in places of a character. Below, see basic calligraphic strokes written by Yunzhang Tian (Table 3).

4.3 Horizontal Stroke 横/héng: A Horizontal Line

There are multiple ways of writing a horizontal stroke based on its real shape in a character. The basic way of writing its common shape is to take three consecutive steps.

Note: The brush does not leave the paper until the end of the whole stroke.

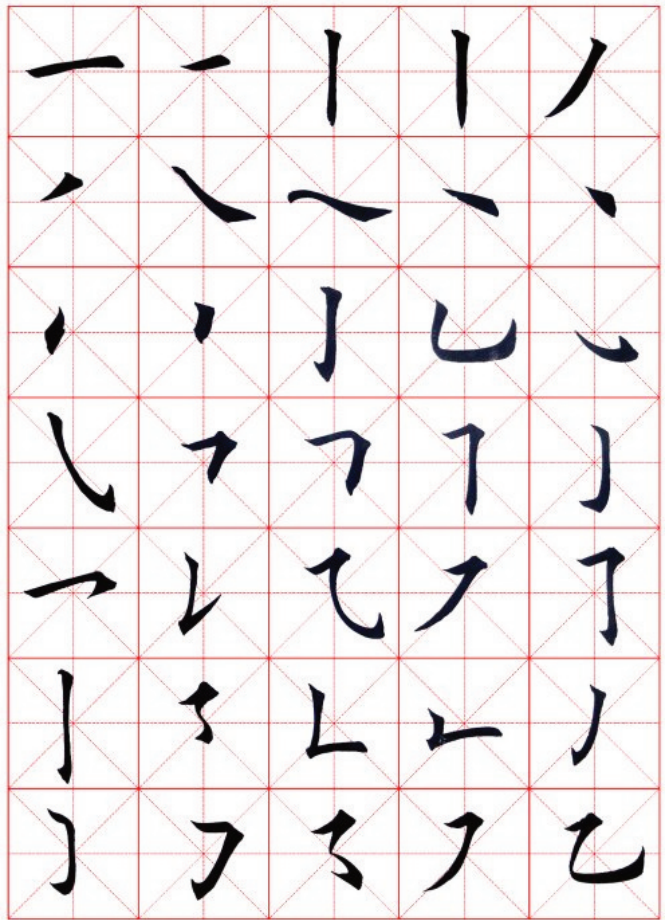


Table 3: Thirty-five basic calligraphic stroke types. (Retrieved from http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_908f3c700101kaih.html)

Step 1: Direct the brush to write a small triangular stroke beginning from the top-left.

Step 2: Write the horizontal line body by dragging the brush horizontally but slightly upward.

Step 3: Finish the stroke with another triangular stroke end.

See the three steps reflected on the stroke below (Figure 2):

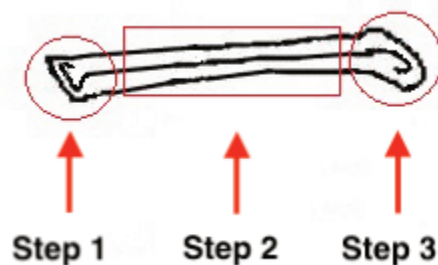


Figure 2: Three Steps for Writing a Common Horizontal Stroke with a Real Sample Stroke

4.4 Vertical 竖/豎/shù: a vertical line

There are at least two kinds of vertical strokes. One is called 垂露竖/垂露豎/chuí lù shù, a vertical stroke with the bottom end that looks like a drop of dew. The other is called 悬针竖/悬針豎/xuán zhēn shù, a vertical stroke with a needle-like bottom end. See the two types of vertical strokes below (Figure 3):



Figure 3: 垂露竖/垂露豎 and 悬针竖/悬針豎

The basic way of writing the 垂露竖/垂露豎 is to take three consecutive steps (Figure 4).

Step 1: Direct the brush to write a small triangular stroke beginning from the top-left.

Step 2: Write the vertical line body by dragging the brush downward.

Step 3: Finish the stroke with a diamond-like end.

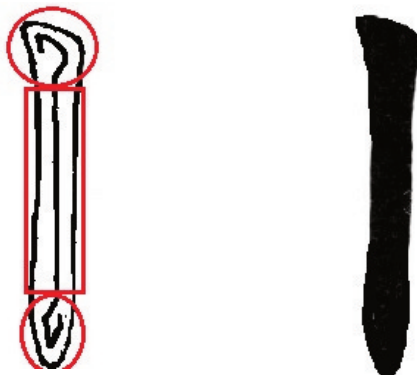


Figure 4: Three Steps to Write A 垂露竖/垂露豎 Stroke with A Real Sample Stroke

The basic way of writing the 悬针竖/悬針豎 is also to take three consecutive steps (Figure 5).

Step 1: Direct the brush to write a small triangular stroke beginning from the top-left.

Step 2: Write the vertical line body by dragging the brush downward.

Step 3: Finish the stroke by gradually lifting the brush.

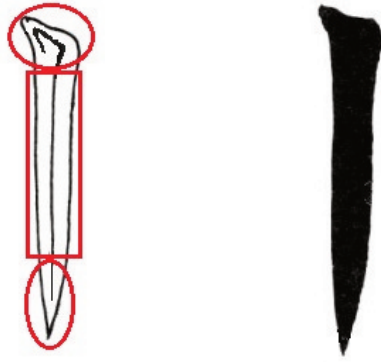


Figure 5: Three Steps for Writing a 悬针竖/悬針豎 Stroke with a Real Sample Stroke

5 Composing Character

An instructor should guide anyone working on this section.

5.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character-writing order (Note: the numbering/order of rules is different from the original on the website). Below are Rules 1-4:

Rule 1: From top to bottom (e.g., 一 and 三)

Rule 2: From left to right (e.g., 川)

Rule 3: Horizontal before vertical (e.g., 十 and 王)

Rule 4: Cutting strokes last (e.g., 千)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can provide additional information. Please note that the actual stroke order in calligraphy is sometimes different from that in regular writing. And the rules only give general guidance. We cannot count on rules to tell the stroke order for all specific characters. Refer to dictionaries when needed.

5.2 Character Writing

Model characters to learn, with character/Pinyin/Meaning below:



二/èr/two



三/sān/three



土/tǔ/earth; soil



王/wáng/king; a surname

Prepare tools and materials. Follow instructions and start to write. Frequently check to make sure posture is correct.

6 Homework

6.1 Purchase writing tools and materials: a medium-sized weasel or mixed-hair brush (狼毫/láng háo or 兼毫/jiān háo), a bottle of ink for Chinese calligraphy (墨/mò), 50-100 sheets of grid rice paper (宣纸/宣紙/xuān zhǐ) for beginners, and an ink stone (砚台/硯台/yàn tái).

6.2 Practice already mastered characters.

6.3 Write 十/shí, 工/gōng, and 干/gān/gàn as follows:



Part III. Additional Resources

1. Chinese Calligraphy <http://asiasociety.org/education/chinese-calligraphy>
2. Kao, H. S., Zhu, L., Chao, A. A., Chen, H. Y., Liu, I. C., & Zhang, M. (2014). Calligraphy and meditation for stress reduction: an experimental comparison. *Psychology research and behavior management*, 7, 47. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3928403/>
3. Interesting video for understanding Chinese characters easily: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbz_g6Kr7D4
4. Videos about the history of the Chinese characters: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVvIA5aahN8>
5. Video of Chinese Calligraphy Documentary: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BzdyBP8NU0>
6. Appreciating Chinese Calligraphy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MEN0CzGv5-Y>

2.

The Evolution Of Chinese Characters, Calligraphy Writing Tools, And Writing Techniques

This chapter will introduce the earliest forms of calligraphic writing and provide a beginner's "toolbox" of materials and basic strokes.

Part I. Culture

1 Evolution of Chinese Characters: Oracle Bones (甲骨文)

甲骨文/jiǎ gǔ wén, or oracle bones, represent the earliest forms of Chinese writing (the middle to late *Shang* Dynasty 商/shāng, 1,500-1,000 BC). Etched on turtle shells and animal bones (see Figure 1), this crudely written script was thought to have divine implications by *Shang* rulers. Ever since, they have provided clues into the life and times of an era long considered mythological rather than historical. Their rudimentary characters resemble objects they represent. Thus, they are considered pictographs (象形字/xiàng xíng zì).



Figure 1: Script on turtle shell and ox bone

Examples – Oracle Bone Script

Pinyin	mǎ	hǔ	shǐ	quǎn	shǔ	xiàng
Modern Form	马/馬	虎	豕	犬	鼠	象
Meaning	horse	tiger	swine	dog	rat	elephant

2 Writing Tools and Materials: 文房四宝/文房四寶/wén fáng sì bǎo (The Four Treasures of Study)

- Brush (笔/筆)

Calligraphers as well as artists use ink brushes known as 笔/筆/bǐ or 毛笔/毛筆/máo bǐ, a tool the Chinese invented around 300 BC. Along with an ink stone, 砚/硯/yàn, an ink stick, 墨/mò, and a certain type of rice paper, 纸/紙/zhǐ, known as 宣纸/宣紙/xuān zhǐ, they form the essential building blocks of calligraphy.

Primitive brushes featured bamboo that enabled hair to be bound to a wooden stalk. Since then brushes have had multiple, versatile uses, with stalks composed of jade, gold, and silver.

Common or normal brushes are made of three types of hair. The first type is the hair of a goat, called 羊毫/yáng háo, soft and better suiting for running-script writing; the second is of a weasel, 狼毫/láng háo, resilient and better for writing of regular and cursive styles; and the third type is of mixture of both hair types, 兼毫/jiān háo. Hair from a pig, a mouse, and a rabbit is also used. Regardless of style, they can be soft, mixed or hard, in big, medium or short sizes, depending on application.

P.E.R.R. Criteria for recognizing and maintaining a brush-tuft: 尖齐圆健/尖齊圓健/jiān qí yuán jiàn, P(ointy), E(ven), R(ound), & R(esilient)

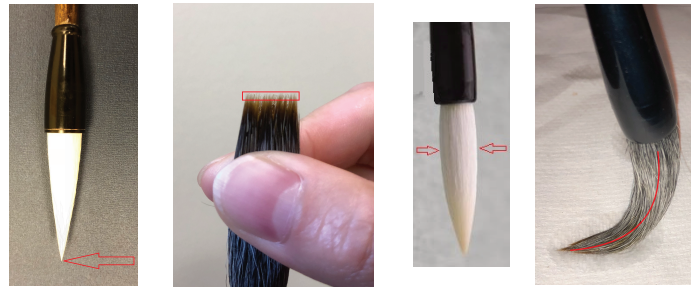


Figure 2: P.E.R.R. Criteria for a good brush

- Ink Stick (墨)

Although meaning ink, 墨/mò traditionally refers to ink sticks. Ink sticks are typically made of soot and glue. When the stick is ground against a stone ink appears, 砚/硯/yàn (see ink stone below). Once water is added, one can begin applying ink to brush. Serious calligraphers and painters prefer high-quality ink stones as they think the stone itself has a great deal to do with the quality and texture of the ink that is ground upon it. Four types of most treasured ink stones include Duan Yan (端砚/端硯), She Yan (歙砚/歙硯), Taohe Yan (洮河砚/洮河硯), and Chengni Yan (澄泥砚/澄泥硯).

- Paper (纸/紙)

Rice paper, 宣纸/宣紙/xuān zhǐ, is made of blue sandalwood bark and rice straw. It is known for its fine, soft texture – features favored by calligraphers and painters. 宣 in the name 宣纸/宣紙 refers to 宣州 (a city in Anhui Province) which is famous for rice-paper manufacturing. Compared with regular paper, rice paper is more absorbent and resistant to wrinkles.

- Ink Stone (砚/硯)

砚/硯 refers to a mortar of stone that calligraphers and painters have used for centuries to grind and hold ink. In addition to stone, ink stones are also manufactured from clay, bronze, iron, and porcelain. Having evolved from a device that individuals used to create dyes, the ink stone probably dates to the 3rd Century BC.

- Seal (印)

Known as 印/yìn or 印章/yìn zhāng, a seal is a general name for printing stamps which are used in lieu of, or together with, signatures in personal documents, office paperwork, artwork, or any item requiring the indication of authorship or ownership. Chinese seals are typically made of stone (for common users), jade (for emperors and high-ranking officials in the past), or other materials. Seals are used with red ink or cinnabar paste. One fascinating aspect of a seal is that each is unique and often reflects the

owner's personality. One can see a seal's distinctive red ink on traditional paintings throughout China and elsewhere in Asia.

In addition to these Four Treasures, a calligrapher should have other tools. These include, but are not limited to, a desk pad (毛毡/máo zhān), a paperweight (镇纸/鎮紙/zhèn zhǐ), a brush hanger (笔挂/筆掛/bǐ guà), and a seal ink-pad (印泥/yìn ní).

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Writing Techniques: 起笔/起筆 and 收笔/收筆 Techniques

起笔/起筆/qǐ bǐ refers to the method of starting a stroke, while 收笔/收筆/shōu bǐ is the way to end a stroke. Beginning a stroke in calligraphy differs from regular writing. For example, the beginning of regular vertical, horizontal, and left falling strokes requires a backward start and then a change in expected direction. Likewise, the end of a series of strokes such as the vertical, horizontal, and even the left and right falling strokes sometimes requires a backward finish after the brush reaches the stroke end. This is also true in clerical script writing, where almost all strokes need a directionally opposite beginning or end to make the strokes look alike 蚕头燕尾/蠶頭燕尾/cán tóu yàn wěi (see Chapter 5 for more details).

2 Strokes That Compose Characters

2.1 Left Falling (撇)

The left falling stroke (撇/piě) always starts at the top right and angles to bottom left as the brush leaves the paper. See the directional arrows in the outlined long and short left-falling strokes.



Figure 3: Long and short left-falling strokes and writing directions

2.2 Right Falling (捺)

The right falling diagonal stroke (捺/nà) always starts at the top left and angles to bottom right as the brush leaves the paper. See the directional arrows in the outlined diagonal and flat strokes.



Figure 4: Diagonal right-falling strokes and flat right-falling strokes

3 Composing Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character writing order. Below are Rules 4 -6:

Rule 4: Cutting strokes last (e.g., 干 and 牛)

Rule 5: Diagonals right-to-left before diagonals left-to-right (e.g., 人, 天, and 木)

Rule 6: Center verticals before outside “wings” (e.g., 木 and 小)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information. Please note that the actual stroke order in calligraphy is sometimes different from that in regular writing. These rules only guide a practitioner. We cannot count on rules to dictate the exact stroke order for all specific characters. When in doubt, refer to dictionaries.

3.2 Characters

人/rén/human being; person, 牛/niú/cow; ox, 走/zǒu/to walk; to leave, 木/mù/wood; tree

3.3 Writing Samples



3.4 Writing by Following Rules

- Prepare the tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

Write 井/jǐng/well, 本/běn /fundamental; measure word for books, 天/tiān/sky; day, and 仁/rén/ benevolent; benevolence.



Part III. Additional Resources

1. Additional readings: <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/>
2. The story of a Chinese character: 木 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kUZMQBNhSTo>
3. The story of a Chinese character: 天 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Q6VMJ1I2E>
4. The story of a Chinese character: 人 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zdIj9N2313w>

3.

Early Forms Of Calligraphy, Confucius And Lao Tzu, and Writing Techniques

This chapter introduces the earliest immortal calligraphers and highlights their contributions to the art. It also cites the central role of Taoism and Confucianism and focuses on large seal script.

Part I. Culture

1 Large Seal Script (大篆)

Large seal script (大篆/dà zhuàn) typically refers to bronze-ware script (金文/jīn wén) and stone-drum script (石鼓文/shí gǔ wén). Calligraphers wrote on the surfaces of bronze bells and cauldrons. To have their inscriptions endure, they used a stylus to write on the wet clay of the mold that was used to cast the bronze vessel. Later inscriptions were engraved after the alloy had been cast. Only oracle bone inscriptions are older than these early forms of writing.



Figure 1: Script on bronze-ware



Figure 2: Script on stone-drums

2 The Legacy of Calligraphy and Culture During This Period

2.1 Laozi 老子/lǎo zǐ and Taoism

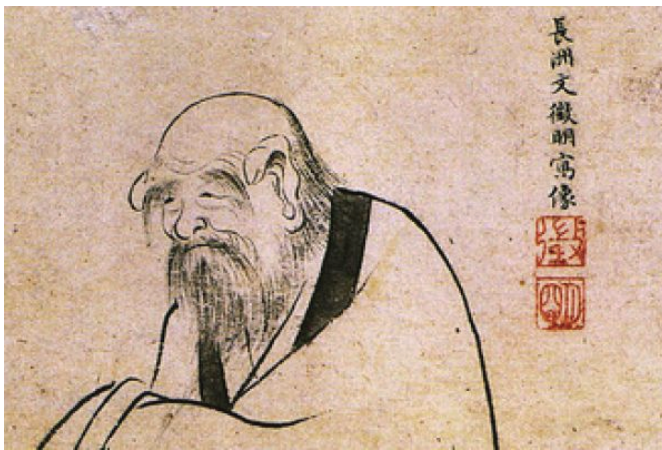


Figure 3: Portrait of Laozi drawn by 文徵明/文徵明 Wen Zhengming (1559-1470)

Laotzu, 老子/lǎo zǐ, literally “Old Master,” was an ancient Chinese philosopher and writer who reputedly wrote *Tao Te Ching* 道德经/道德經/dào dé jīng, the founding philosophical tenets of Taoism. He was considered a deity in Taoism and other traditional Chinese religions.

Taoism, also known as Daoism, is a religion and philosophy that emphasizes living in harmony with the Tao, 道/dào, also known as *Dao*, or the “Way.” At its core, Taoism focuses on simplicity, spontaneity and naturalness. It emphasizes 无为/

無為/wú wéi or effortless action. Its Three Treasures are: 慈/cí, or “compassion,” 俭/儉/jiǎn, or “frugality,” and 不敢为天下先/不敢為天下先/bù gǎn wéi tiān xià xiān, or “humility.” As for its lasting impact on calligraphy, followers of this philosophy, regardless of station in life, focus on self-cultivation and self-restraint. It is believed that a person who has achieved greatness is someone with a highly developed brush-writing skill.

2.2 Confucius 孔子 and Confucianism

Confucius (孔子/kǒng zǐ) (551–479 BC) was an immortal teacher and philosopher of the *Spring and Autumn Periods* (春秋时期/春秋時期/chūn qiū shí qī) who preached personal and institutional morality, correct social relationships, justice, and sincerity. His thoughts evolved into a system known as Confucianism that, among other things, influenced the works of calligraphers and painters throughout China, and East and Southeast Asia.

3 Yin and Yang

Yin and Yang (阴阳/陰陽/yīn yáng), in Chinese culture, is believed to have been generated from the “oneness of the universe.” They exist in harmony with each other to maintain good balance. Yin is characterized as slow, soft, yielding, diffuse, cold, wet, and passive; it is associated with water, earth, the moon, femininity, and night time. Yang, by contrast, is fast, hard, solid, focused, hot, dry, and active; it is associated with fire, sky, the sun, masculinity and daytime. In the Chinese religion, Taoists favor Yin with an emphasis on reclusion and Confucianists favor Yang to encourage people to positively engage themselves in social life. Yin and Yang can be reflected in Chinese calligraphy through the balance between black and white, big and small, straight and curved, round and angular, etc.



Figure 4: Portrait of Confucius drawn by 吴道子 (Wu Daozi) (685-758)

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Techniques of Using Brush

1.1 以腕运笔/以腕運筆 Technique

以腕运笔/以腕運筆/yǐ wàn yùn bǐ is the proper way of writing. It means to let the wrist, not the fingers, lead brush movement.

1.2 提 and 按 Techniques

提/tí (to lift; raise) means to write with a partly raised brush to produce thin or small-sized strokes. 按/àn (to press) means to press the brush to some extent to make thick or large strokes. Beginners need to practice before they can gain full control of the brush to have the expected stroke thickness or size. Figure 5 illustrates the two techniques with the downward arrow ↓ meaning 按 and the upward arrow ↑ for 提.

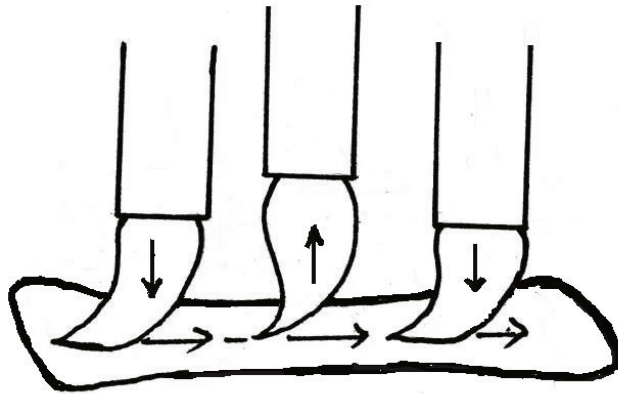


Figure 5: 按, 提, and then 按 in writing

2 Strokes That Compose Characters: Dots (点/點)

In Chinese calligraphy, there are more kinds of dots (点/點/diǎn) than one would expect. To write a dot is not a simple down-and-up motion. Instead, each type of dot needs to be written differently. Follow the directions in Figure 6.

序号	笔画	名 称	例 字	序号	笔画	名 称	例 字
1	丶	点(diǎn)	广	17	乚	横折弯钩 (héng zhé wān gōu)	九
2	一	横(héng)	王	18	ㄣ	横撇弯钩 (héng piě wān gōu)	那
3	丨	竖(shù)	巾	19	ㄣ	横折折折钩(héng zhé zhé zhé gōu)	奶
4	㇏	撇(piě)	白	20	ㄣ	竖折折钩 (shù zhé zhé gōu)	与
5	㇏	捺(nà)	八	21	ㄣ	竖 弯(shù wān)	四
6	㇏	提(tí)	打	22	乚	横折弯 (héng zhé wān)	沿
7	㇏	撇点 (piě diǎn)	巡	23	ㄣ	横折(héng zhé)	口
8	㇏	竖提 (shù tí)	农	24	ㄣ	竖折(shù zhé)	山
9	㇏	横折提 (héng zhé tí)	论	25	ㄣ	撇折(piě zhé)	云
10	㇏	弯 钩 (wān gōu)	承	26	ㄣ	横撇(héng piě)	水
11	㇏	竖 钩 (shù gōu)	小	27	ㄣ	横折折撇 (héng zhé zhé piě)	建
12	㇏	竖弯钩 (shù wān gōu)	屯	28	ㄣ	竖折撇 (shù zhé piě)	专
13	㇏	斜 钩 (xié gōu)	浅	29	ㄣ	横斜钩 (héng xié gōu)	风
14	㇏	卧 钩 (wò gōu)	心	30	ㄣ	竖折折 (shù zhé zhé)	鼎
15	㇏	横 钩 (héng gōu)	写	31	ㄣ	横折折 (héng zhé zhé)	凹
16	㇏	横折钩 (héng zhé gōu)	月	32	ㄣ	横折折折 (héng zhé zhé zhé)	凸

Figure 6: Different types of dots and their writing in Chinese calligraphy

3 Composing Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character-writing order. Below is Rule 7:

Rule 7: Top or upper-left dots first (e.g., 六, 火, and 羊)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information.

3.2 Characters

江/jiāng/river; 六/liù/six; 羊/yáng/sheep; goat

3.3 Sample Writing



3.4 Writing by Following Rules

- Prepare the tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

4.1 Practice composing other characters: 主/zhǔ/boss; lord; 文/wén/language; 坐/zuò/to sit; 火/huǒ/fire.



4.2 Search online to find more about Taoism, Confucianism, and Yin-Yang Theory.

Part III. Additional Resources

1. StarTalk Four Treasure of Study: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_ds9ZbjDkY
2. Making a Chinese Calligraphy Brush. The Process: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5j3RW8PF8M>

Calligraphy And Writing Techniques in the Qin and Han Dynasties

This chapter focuses on the distinctive scripts of early dynasties that are more than 2,000 years old and reviews various brush techniques. It features additional information on seal script.

Part I. Culture

1 Qin Dynasty and Calligraphy

The *Qin* Dynasty (秦/qín) was the first dynasty of Imperial China, lasting from 221 to 206 BC. 秦始皇/qín shǐ huáng, the First Emperor of Qin, introduced a range of reforms such as standardized currency, weights, measures, and a uniform system of writing, which aimed to unify the state and promote commerce. The general term seal script can be used to refer to several types of seal scripts, including the large or great seal script (大篆/dà zhuàn) and the lesser or small seal script (小篆/xiǎo zhuàn). Most commonly, without any other clarifying terminology, seal script refers to the latter. The term large seal script itself can also cover a broad variety of scripts. These include a variation of *Qin* writing that is earlier than the small seal characters, but also the earlier *Western Zhou* forms, or even oracle bone characters, as well.

Clerical script (隶书/隸書/lì shū) evolved in the *Warring States Period* (战国时期/戰國時期/zhàn guó shí qī) to the *Qin*. It was dominant in the *Han* Dynasty (汉/漢/hàn), and remained in use through the *Wei-Jin* periods (魏晋时期/魏晉時期/wèi jìn shí qī). Due to its high legibility, it is still used today as an artistic touch in headlines, signboards, and advertisements.



Figure 1: Rubbing of large seal script 大篆, small seal script 小篆, and clerical script 隶书/隸書(in order)

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Brush Techniques

Experienced calligraphers give utmost attention to the proper use of a brush's tip. It's because different parts a brush can create different effects. Here are three techniques to note.

1.1: 中锋/中鋒/zhōng fēng

The most preferred technique is known as writing with 中锋/中鋒, a center-tip technique. The proper way to apply this technique is to hold the brush vertically so that the tip of the brush always moves along the middle line of the stroke.

1.2 侧锋/側鋒/cè fēng and 偏锋/偏鋒/piān fēng:

侧锋/側鋒 and 偏锋/偏鋒 are two different techniques but both refer to using the side of the brush tip. Using 偏锋/偏鋒 means to write using the side of a brush. When the brush is mildly slanted, it is called 侧锋/側鋒 technique, or slant-tip writing.

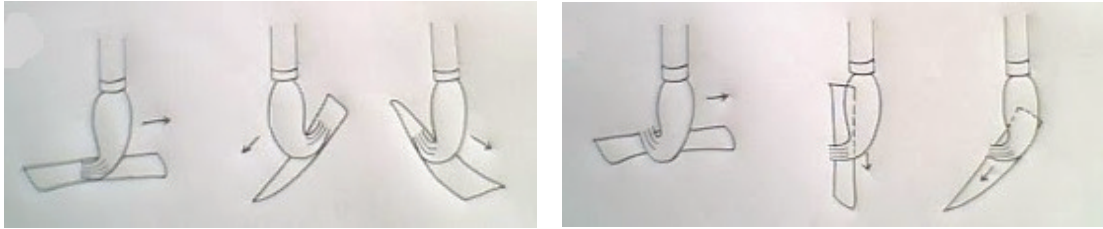


Figure 2: 中锋/中鋒 and 侧锋/側鋒 (Adapted from 中华书法 Chinese Calligraphy)

1.3 Best Technique Selection

Although each of the techniques can produce different writing effects, good calligraphers strongly suggest 中锋/中鋒 unless 侧锋/側鋒 or 偏锋/偏鋒 is required.

2 Strokes That Compose Characters

2.1 横折 héng zhé horizontal-vertical turn

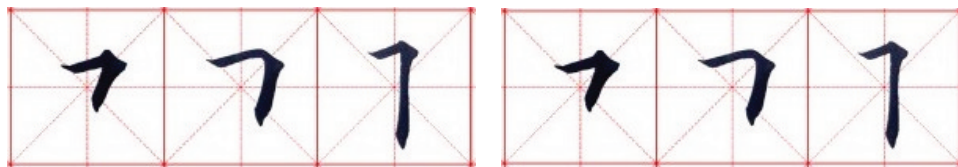


Figure 3: Three types of a horizontal-vertical turn

There are three types of horizontal-vertical turns. Each type needs a downward turn at the end of the horizontal part. The turning point is created by pressing the brush slightly to the down-right side to produce an angular turning effect.

2.2 竖折/竖折/shù zhé vertical-horizontal turn

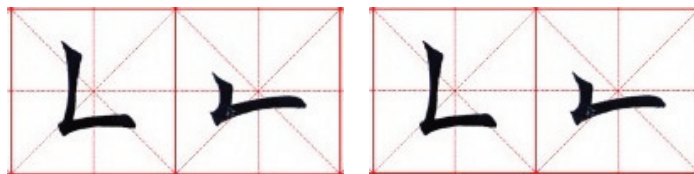


Figure 4: Two types of a vertical-horizontal turn

For both, it is necessary to make a rightward turn at the end of the vertical part. The turning point is done by pressing the brush slightly to the bottom-right side to produce the angular turning effect.

3 Composing Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character writing order. Below is Rule 8:

Rule 8: Left vertical before enclosing (e.g., 日)

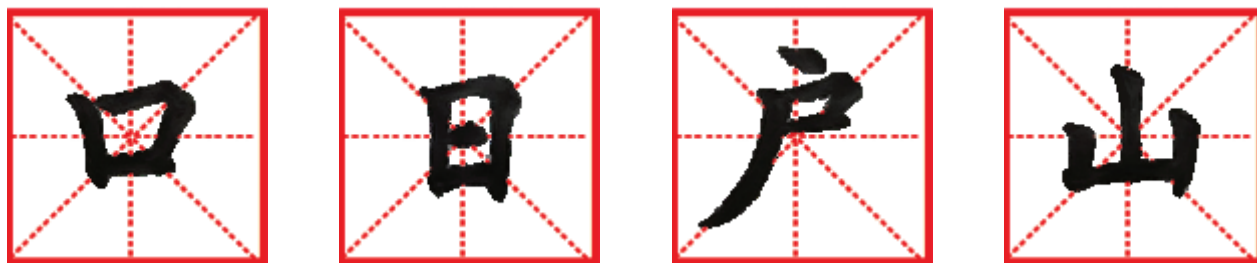
Rule 9: Inside before outside (e.g., 日 and 自)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information.

3.2 Characters

口/kǒu/mouth; 日/rì/sun, day; 户/hù/household, door; 山/shān/mountain, hill

3.3 Sample calligraphy characters



3.4 Writing by Following Rules

- Prepare tools and materials.
- Start to write by following instructions.
- Be aware of rules for posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

4.1 Practice more characters: 品/pǐn/product, moral character; 自/zì/self, from; 谷/gǔ/valley, grain; 出/chū/to go out, to exit



4.2 Search online to find differences between the *Qin* and *Han* clerical styles.

Part III. Additional Resources

1. Qin Shihuang: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qin_Shi_Huang
2. Seal Script: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_script
3. Clerical Script: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerical_script
4. Chinese Calligraphy: <http://icalligraphy.blogspot.com/2010/07/brush-techniques-slanting-tip-for.html>

5.

Calligraphy During the Three Kingdoms Period and Jin Dynasty

This chapter reveals that, regardless of political and civil disorder, devotion to calligraphy persevered. It includes details on clerical and regular, or standard, script.

Part I. Culture

1 Historical Highlights

1.1 The *Wei* Period (220-265)

The *Three Kingdoms* Period (三国/三國/sān guó) included three distinctive states: the *Wei* (魏/wèi), the *Shu* (蜀/shǔ), and the *Wu* (吴/吳/wú). Among them, scholars of the art of calligraphy consider the *Wei* to have played the most prominent role. At the onset of the *Wei*, clerical style (隶书/隸書/lì shū) was still in use – a form followed by such noteworthy calligraphers as Zhong You (钟繇/鍾繇), Wei Guan (卫瓘/衛瓘), Huang Xiang (皇象), Handan Chun (邯鄲淳/邯鄲淳), Suo Jing (索靖), and Liu Desheng (刘德升/劉德昇), among others.

The most celebrated was Zhong You (钟繇/鍾繇/zhōng yóu) (151-230) who, it is said, created regular or standard script (楷书/楷書/kǎi shū). This came into use toward the end of the *Han* and matured in the *Tang*. Beginners tend to study regular script first because of easy-to-recognize characters that date from this era. Zhong’s calligraphy was compared to a “swan flying in the sky” and a “wild goose playing in the lake.” Emperor Liang Wu Di was so struck by Zhong’s genius that he said the calligraphy reflected “12 kinds of beauty.”

1.2 *Jin* Dynasty (Western Jin 265-316/317, Eastern Jin 317-420)

Two distinct periods characterize the *Jin* (晋/晉/jìn): the *Western Jin* (西晋/西晉/xī jìn), ruling China from 265 to 316/317AD, and the *Eastern Jin* (东晋/東晉/dōng jìn), from 317 to 420 AD.

Although China was reunited under the Western in 280, it fell into civil war and was open to invasion shortly thereafter. This eventually led to the second division – the <Eastern.

2 Distinguished Calligraphers

2.1 Madame Wei (卫夫人/衛夫人)

Despite this turmoil, calligraphy attained its highest art form during the Jin, emblematic of renowned calligraphers such as Madame Wei (卫夫人/衛夫人/wèi fū ren) and Wang Xizhi (王羲之/wáng xī zhī). Madame Wei is the presumed author of 笔阵图/筆陣圖/bǐ zhèn tú, an important book on calligraphy theory. In her writings she expressed a perspective on the standardized flow of calligraphy and emphasized the importance of brush, ink, ink stone and the seven brush-holding methods. Her role in the development of calligraphy is considered so significant that she is treated as the most renowned and revered female calligrapher in Chinese history.

2.2 Wang Xizhi (王羲之)

Wang Xizhi (303-361) was awarded the title of Calligrapher-Sage. His 兰亭集序/蘭亭集序/lán tíng jí xù (literally, *Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion*), was regarded as the foremost authority on running style. Even though the original treatise was believed buried with an emperor, we can see traces of the work in copies written by great calligraphers who followed. For thousands of years Wang's styles have become paradigms of Chinese calligraphy. Another one of his books, 书论/書論/shū lùn, *On Calligraphy*, is still regarded as a classic.

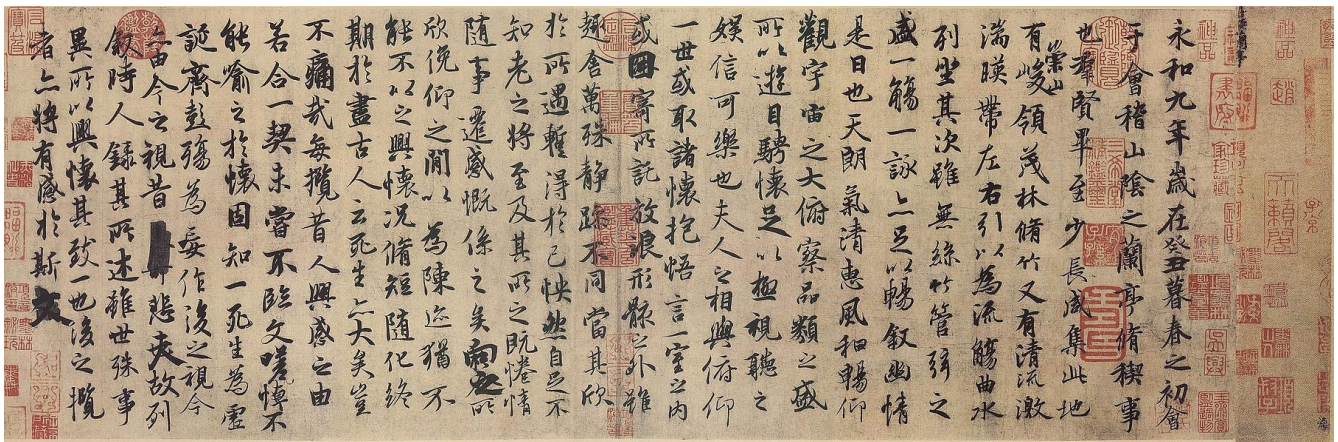


Figure 1: A tracing copy of 兰亭集序/蘭亭集序, preserved in Palace Museum in Beijing

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Brush Techniques

The two ends of a stroke can be made differently so as to have different appearances. Techniques often include 露锋/露鋒 and 藏锋/藏鋒.

1.1 露锋/露鋒

露锋/露鋒/lòu fēng refers to an exposed, or revealed, tip. To write a stroke with an exposed tip, one moves the brush in the original direction and purposely reveals the tip of the stroke. The stroke with the exposed tip looks sharp on the end.

1.2 藏锋/藏鋒

藏锋/藏鋒/cáng fēng is a concealed tip. To make a concealed tip requires starting with a short backward beginning (called 逆锋起笔/逆鋒起筆/nì fēng qǐ bǐ). To finish the stroke one makes an additional short backward movement (called 逆锋收笔/逆鋒收筆/nì fēng shōu bǐ). The stroke with the concealed tip look blunter.

2 Strokes: 钩/鈎

There are many types of hooks (钩/鈎/gōu) in Chinese calligraphy. Each is actually part of a stroke. These include: a hook with a vertical-hook; a bend-hook; a horizontal-turning-hook; and a horizontal-hook (Figure 2). Hooks can point to the left side (see Figure 2) or right side (see Chapter 6). All of them result from a sudden change of brush direction followed by a swift pointed end. The correct way of writing hooks, in general, is to pause at the turning point, change the writing direction, and then make the triangular-like hook end.

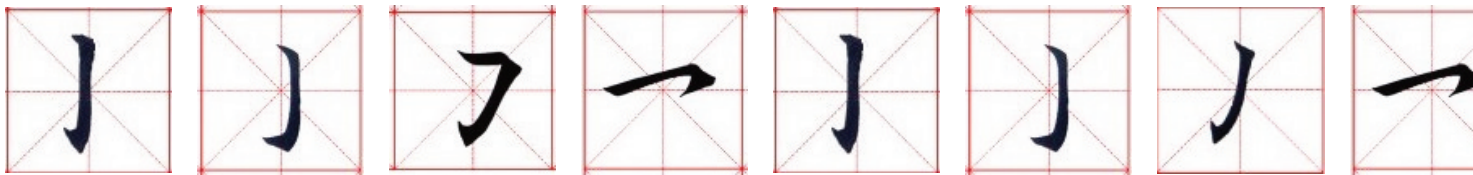


Figure 2: Four types of leftward hook

3 Composing Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character writing order. Below is Rule 6 (for review).

Rule 6: Center verticals before outside “wings” (e.g., 小, 水, and 山)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information.

3.2 Characters

小/xiǎo/small, little, young; 宇/yǔ/universe; 方/fāng/square, location

3.3 Sample Calligraphy Characters



3.4 Writing by following rules.

- Prepare the tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

4.1 Write the following characters:



水/shuǐ/water; 字/zì/word, character; 力/lì/strength, power

4.2 Search on line for more calligraphers and their work during the *Three Kingdom Period* and *Jin Dynasty*.

Part III. Additional Resources

1. Writing Techniques: <http://www.asianbrushpainter.com/blog/knowledgebase/more-brush-techniques/#more-521>
2. The Palace Museum: <http://en.dpm.org.cn/EXPLORE/artworks/1336.html>
3. Wei and Jin Dynasties: <http://www.art-virtue.com/history/wei-jin/wei-jin.htm>
4. Chinasage: <http://www.chinasage.info/dynastydisunity.htm>

6.

The Stelae Calligraphy Style in the Northern and Southern Dynasties

This chapter introduces the uniqueness of the Stelae style of writing that was to be inscribed in such diverse places as stone columns, cliffs and tablets. There is more information on regular script, too.

Part I. Culture

The *Northern and Southern Dynasties* (南北朝/nán běi cháo) (420-589) follow the *Wei* and *Jin* periods. It was during this era that northerners began to adopt regular script as it developed from clerical script. Most noteworthy is that this type of script started to appear as engravings on stelae, upright stone columns or slabs. (Meanwhile, Wang Xizhi's running style remained popular in the south).

Besides columns and slabs, the engravings were inscribed on tablets, monuments on cliffs, and epitaphs. Written during the *Wei*, these engravings are said to reflect what is now known as the *Wei Stelae Style* (魏碑体/魏碑體/wèi bēi tǐ). As a transitional style, this calligraphy style borrows from both clerical and regular characteristics. Characters are moderately flat and wide (less so than the clerical style) but appear tall (similar to regular style). Another feature is its series of angular strokes (方笔/方筆/fāng bǐ). Figure 1 shows several famous ones. For information, visit Read China 读中国.

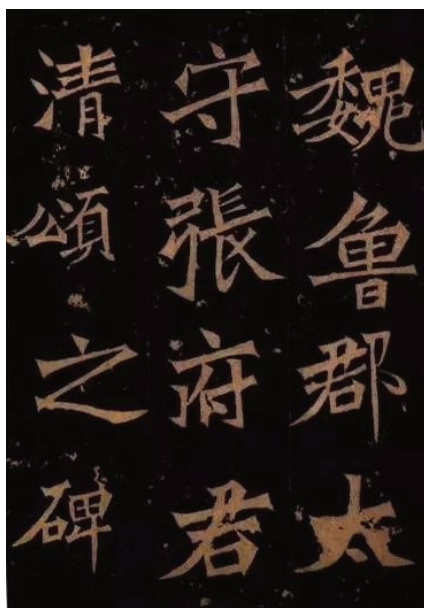
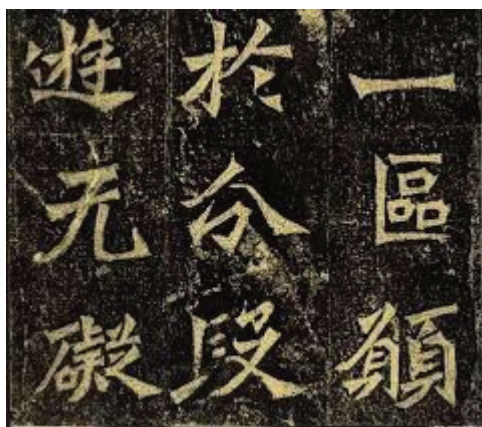


Figure 1: Wei Stelae calligraphy rubbings

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Brush Techniques: 提笔/提筆 and 顿笔/頓筆

提笔/提筆/tí bǐ and 顿笔/頓筆/dùn bǐ are typically used for stroke ending and turning. Unlike 提 in Chapter 3, 提笔/提筆 is a quick-lifting brush movement; also 顿笔/頓筆 is a quick press-down movement to make a part of a stroke. (Note: 点/點/diǎn illustrated with the second picture in Figure 2. A pause must follow 顿笔/頓筆 – to make it possible to change writing direction quickly.)

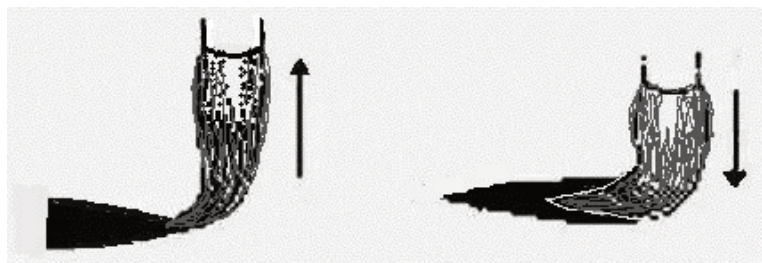


Figure 2: 提笔/提筆 and 顿笔/頓筆 movements

2 Stroke Writing

As described in Chapter 5, hooks (钩/鉤) can end up being pointed to both right and left sides. Figure 3

lists four types of rightward hooks. Technically, the last stroke in Figure 3 is not a hook. Rather it is a rising stroke. But the stroke and the stroke coming earlier in stroke order are often written as one stroke. For example, there is no break between these two strokes, so it is included in the hook category.

Like the leftward hooks, the rightward hooks are accomplished with a sudden change of brush direction followed by a swift pointed end. Again, the correct way of writing hooks, in general, is to follow these steps: first, pause at the turning point; change writing direction; and then make the triangular-like hook end.



Figure 3: Rightward hooks

3 Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character writing order. Below are Rules 10 and 11:

Rule 10: Outside before inside (e.g., 凡)

Rule 11: Inside or upper-right dots last (凡 and 成)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information.

3.2 Characters

化/huà: to change; 心/xīn: heart; 成/chéng: to succeed; 凡/fán, all; 切/qiē, to cut/qiè, anxious

3.3 Sample characters



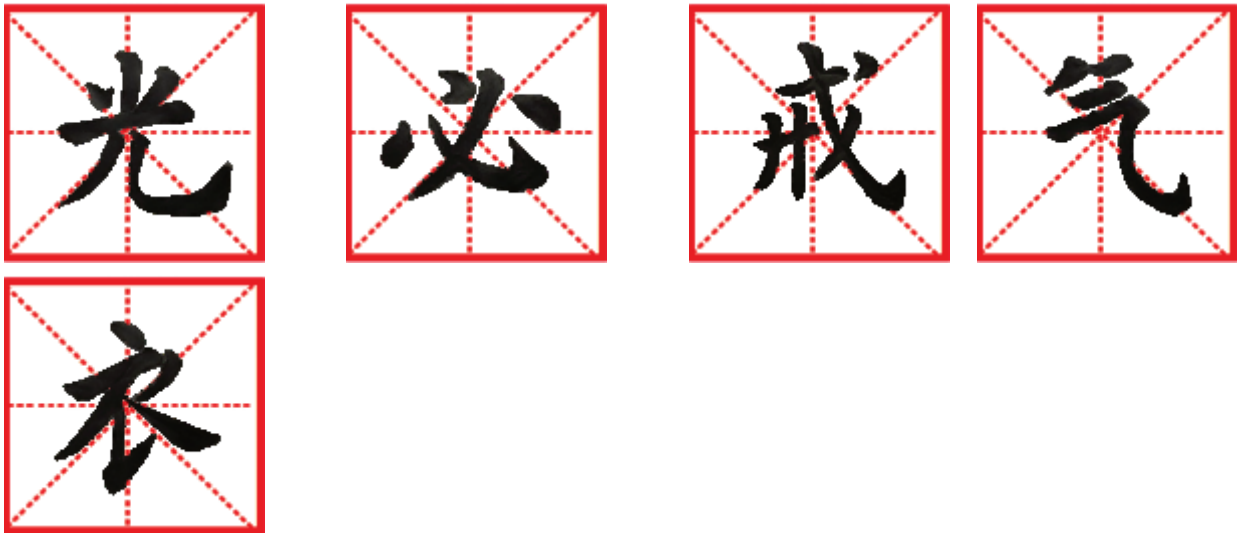
3.4 Writing

- Prepare tools and materials.
- Start to write following instructions.
- Be aware of proper rules for posture and of stroke order.

4 Homework

4.1 Characters for practice:

光 guāng: light/exhausted; 必 bì: heart; 戒 jiè: to abandon; 气 qì, air; 衣 yī, clothes



4.2 Search online to answer why Wei Stelae Style is still popular today in China.

Part III. Additional Resources

1. Calligraphy in the *Six Dynasty Period*: <https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/callig/7calsixd.htm>

Highest Expressions of Calligraphy: Tang Dynasty and the Eight Techniques Of 永

This chapter focuses on the dazzling stroke techniques that were fully developed during the Tang Dynasty in step with an explosion of expression in poetry and painting. Regular and cursive scripts are also featured.

Part I. Culture

By all accounts, the *Tang* Dynasty (唐朝/táng cháo) (618-907) is considered China's Golden Age, a period of wise governance, prosperity, long-lasting peace and active commerce and trade. The art forms of poetry, painting and calligraphy were fully developed and revered by a host of well-accomplished poets, artists, and calligraphers.

1 Tang Poetry 唐诗/唐詩

During the *Tang*, Chinese literature, especially poetry, reached its zenith. 李白/lǐ bó (or, lǐ bái), Li Bo or Li Bai, a poet of immortality, attained the title of 诗仙/詩僊/shī xiān (*Poetic Genius*). Passion, imagination and elegance of expression mark his works – some exceeding 900 verses in total. Even now his poem 静夜思/靜夜思/jìng yè sī, *Thoughts on the Silent Night*, remains popular.

Likewise, 杜甫/dù fǔ, Du Fu, known as 诗圣/詩聖/shī shèng (*Saint of Poem*), is another immortal. He wrote at least 1,500 poems. His works are strict in verse, remarkable for their range of mood and content, including his expressions of political and social issues. His 登高/dēng gāo (*Climbing Up*) attained unmatched perfection.

王维/王維/wáng wéi, Wang Wei, the poet of landscape, wrote hundreds of poems, all elegant and exquisite. Wang Wei was a master of 绝句/絕句/jué jù (a poem of four lines, each containing five or seven characters, with a strict tonal pattern and rhythm). Many of his quatrains depict quiet scenes of water and mist, with few other details or human presence. 相思/xiāng sī (*Missing*) is one of his most famous poems.

2 Classical Chinese Painting 国画/國畫

Classical Chinese painting, 国画/國畫/*guó huà*, literally “native painting,” as opposed to Western styles of art, is done with a brush and black ink and/or colored pigments typically on rice paper or silk. The finished work can be mounted on scrolls. The two main techniques are 工笔/工筆/*gōng bǐ* (meticulous) and 水墨/*shuǐ mò* (water and ink). 水墨 painting is also called 写意/寫意/*xiě yì* or “freehand style” and known as 文人画/文人畫/*wén rén huà* (literati painting). Landscape painting, 山水画/山水畫/*shān shuǐ huà*, was regarded as the highest form of Chinese painting.

国画/國畫 is often seen with calligraphy directly on the picture. Typically, once an artist finished a painting, he would inscribe his name followed by representative seal(s) (印/*yìn*). Other details could include a date, details about the person for whom the picture was painted, the occasion captured by the painting, even the style of the painting. It was also not unusual for an artist to write a poem or prose that touched on topics from literature and painting to metaphysics and philosophy. What’s so significant is that these inscriptions often provide great insight into a painter’s personality, philosophy and style.

3 Calligraphy

During the *Tang* and even *Sui* (隋/*suí*) (581-619) Dynasties, calligraphy was widely practiced and studied.

3.1 Theories on Calligraphy

- 永字八法/*yǒng zì bā fǎ*: The Eight Stoking Methods in 永 (*yǒng*) Writing. – 側(側(点/點), 勒(橫/橫), 努(直), 趯(钩/鉤), 策(提), 掠(长撇/長撇), 啄(短撇), and 磔(捺) (dot, horizontal, vertical, rise, long left-falling, short left-falling, and right-falling strokes).
- 锥画沙/錐畫沙/*zhuī huà shā*: it’s a technique of writing developed by 孙过庭/孫過庭/*sūn guò tíng*, a master calligrapher, on the basis of earlier practices. It reflects right-stroke writing – to write as drawing on sand with an awl as well as to emphasize 中锋用笔/中鋒用筆/*zhōng fēng yòng bǐ*, or center-tip writing. This became the standard for centuries.



Adapted from Fang Hongyi (2009). 历代书论释译楷书丛帖：永字八法. Beijing: China Bookstore Press.
Figure 1: The Eight Stoking Methods in 永 writing

- 书谱/書譜/shū pǔ, is one of the first documents to systematically record and analyze Chinese calligraphy. Written by 孙过庭/孫過庭 in cursive style, it is often used as an indispensable writing guide.

3.2 Calligraphers and Scripts

Devotion to calligraphy was so all-encompassing during this period that practitioners focused on every major script, leading to the full development of regular and cursive styles.

3.2.1 Regular Style 楷书/楷書

The three sub-styles of regular script were well established at this time. They are 欧体/歐體, 颜体/顏體, and 柳体/柳體. Since then, most calligraphy students start learning 楷书/楷書/kǎi shū, regular style, by choosing one of them.

Ouyang Xun (欧阳询/歐陽詢/ōu yáng xún) (557-641 AD), creator of 欧体/歐體/ōu tǐ, ou style, is often considered the dynasty's supreme 楷书/楷書 calligrapher. Characters have a certain rigidity and strength in style that is also marked by solemnity and grace. His most famous work is the Stelae in the 九成宫/jiǔ chéng gōng, Jiuchenggong Palace.

Yan Zhenqing (颜真卿/顏真卿/yán zhēn qīng) (709-785 AD), is considered one of the most innovative and influential of all Chinese calligraphers largely because he abandoned popular styles of that time and created his own, 颜体/顏體/yán tǐ, yan style. The style has a grandeur and loftiness combined with bold strokes and characters.

Liu Gongquan (柳公权/柳公權/liǔ gōng quán) (778-865 AD), combined the styles of 欧体/歐體 and 颜体/顏體 to create 柳体/柳體/liǔ tǐ, liu style. Notable for its clarity, it gained widespread acclaim especially among high-ranking officials. Liu's characterization of brushwork – “*an upright heart makes for an upright brush*” (心正则笔正/心正則筆正/xīn zhèng zé bǐ zhèng) – has become a classic description of how calligraphy reflects an artist's unique personality.

There were also many other well-established calligraphers during *Tang*. They include 虞世南/yú shì nán, 褚遂良/chǔ suí liáng, and 唐太宗/táng tài zōng (Emperor Tang Tai Zong).

3.2.2 Cursive Script 草书/草書 and Distinguished Calligraphers

As the originator of wild cursive style (狂草) and a nonconformist in spirit, 张旭/張旭/zhāng xù (approx. 675-750) acted altogether against convention, earning the name “Crazy Zhang.” He was fond of drinking, and while intoxicated, he was inspired and would proceed to create his wonderful cursive calligraphy in front of visiting dignitaries. Figure 2 is one part from his 古诗四帖/古詩四帖/gǔ shī sì tiè (*Calligraphy Pieces of Four Classical Poems*).

怀素/懷素/huái sù (725-785 AD) is also famous for cursive style. His calligraphy resembled snakes and dragons reeling in storms, lighting, and thunder. In Huai Su’s 自叙帖/zì xù tiè (*Autobiography in Cao Style*) (Figure 3), the artist used a fine brush to write larger characters. The strokes are rounded and dashing, almost as if they were steel wires curled and bent. The tip of the brush is exposed where it is lifted from the paper, leaving a distinctive hook – hence the description “silver hooks and steel strokes.” A continuous cursive force permeates the entire piece. The brush skirts up, down, left, and right as it speeds across the paper.

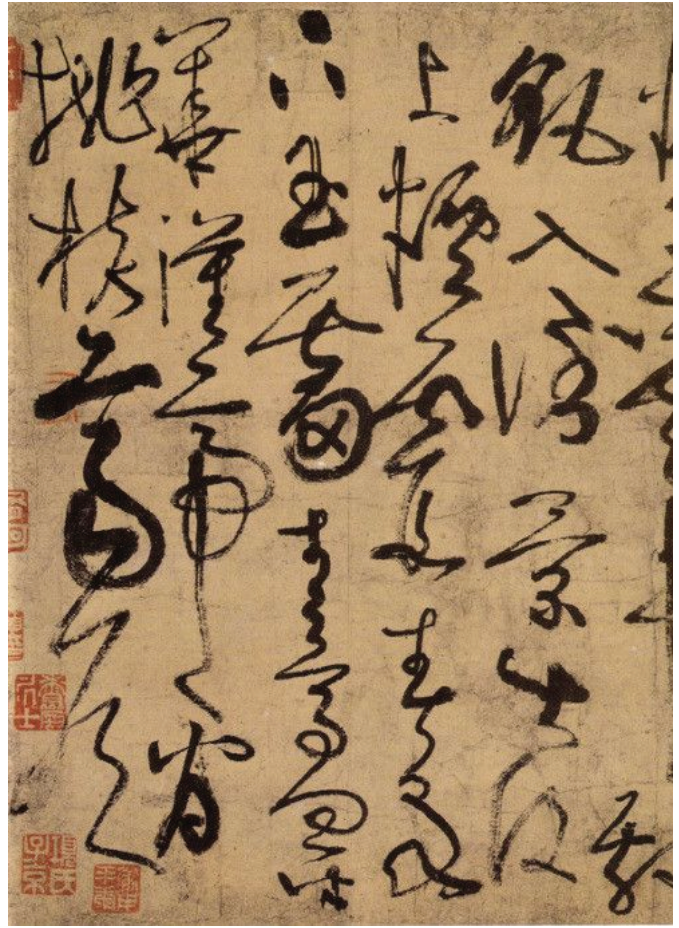


Figure 2: Calligraphy pieces of four classical poems written by 张旭/張旭

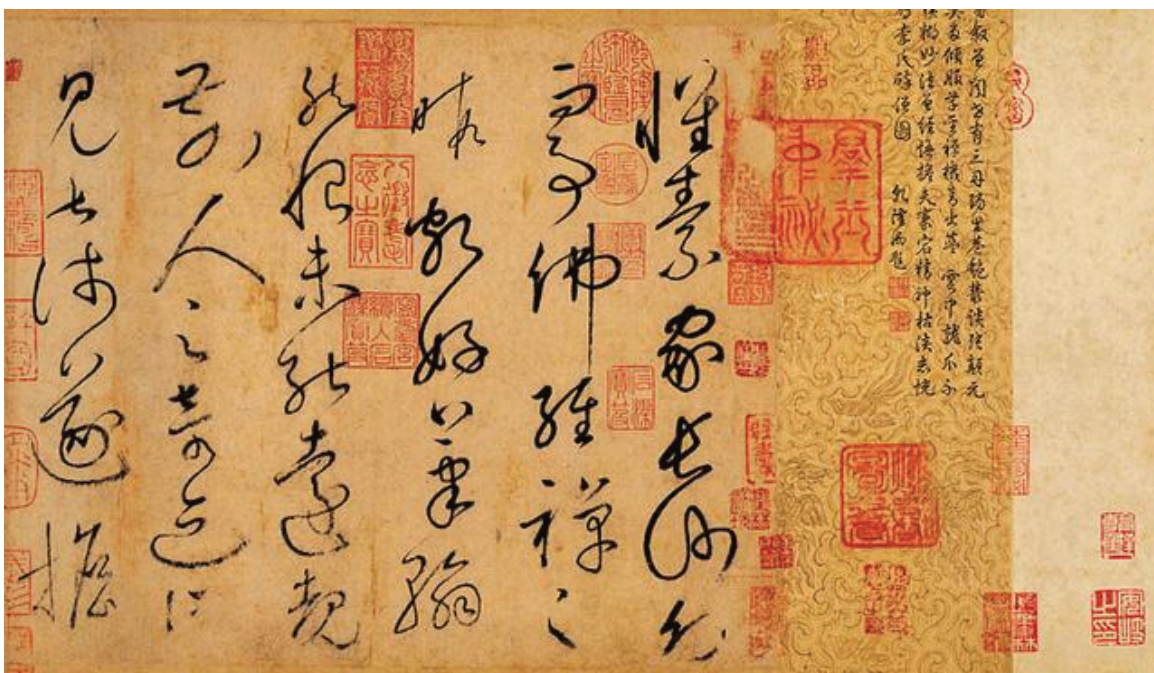


Figure 3: One part of the Autobiography written by 怀素/懷素

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Strokes

These three strokes consist of one or more turnings. Instructors will show how to change the writing directions (i.e., to make the turning) by adjusting the brushes. One key principle that needs to be kept in mind is to write with the center tip no matter which direction the writing is in.



2 Character Writing

2.1 Characters

永/yǒng/forever; 艺/yì/art, skill; 乃/nǎi/to be

2.2 Sample Calligraphy Characters



2.3 Writing by following rules

- Prepare tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for proper posture and of stroke order.

3 Homework

3.1 Characters for practice:

九/jiǔ/nine; 水/shuǐ/water; 安/ān/piece, safe



3.2 Search online to find more information about 永字八法 and see how much the technique sets can help with your calligraphy writing.

Part III Additional Resources

1. Three Perfections: <https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/three-perfections-poetry-calligraphy-and-painting-in-chinese-art/>

2. Chinese Calligraphy Main Style & Learn from Rubbings: <http://www.skyren-art.com/en/dingshimei/english-articles/127-learn-from-rubbings.html>

The Song Dynasty: Its Distinctive "Skinny, Golden" Style of Calligraphy

This chapter highlights the most culturally brilliant era in the later imperial Chinese history and covers the versatility of differing stroke patterns.

Part I. Culture

1 Two Sub-Dynasties

The *Song* Dynasty (960-1279 AD), lasting more than 300 years, was divided into two distinct periods: *Northern Song* 北宋/běi sòng and *Southern Song* 南宋/. During the *Northern* (960–1127), the dynasty controlled most of what is now Eastern China. The *Southern* (1127–1279 AD) refers to the period after the *Song* lost control of its northern half due to its defeat by the *Jin* (金/jīn, a country to the north of China). As a result, the *Song* court retreated south of the Yangtze River.

2 Social Development

Generally speaking, the *Song* is among the greatest in China's history. Social development flourished. So did technology, science, philosophy, mathematics, and engineering. Inventions included woodblock printing and movable-type printing, leading to the spread of literature and, thereafter, printed forms of information.

3 Song Poetry

Song poetry, called *Ci* (词/詞/cí), evolved from *Tang* poetry. Certain fixed-rhythm forms (originally tunes of songs) characterize its poetry. Each poem has a title that specifies a particular fixed pattern of tone, rhythm, number of syllables (or characters) per line and the number of lines. Surprisingly it has little or nothing to do with a poem's content. Prominent *Song* poets include Su Shi (苏轼/蘇軾/sū shì),

Ouyang Xiu (欧阳修/歐陽脩/ōu yáng xiū), Lu You (陆游/lù yóu), Yang Wanli (杨万里/楊萬里/yáng wàn lǐ), and Li Qingzhao (李清照/lǐ qīng zhào).

4 Calligraphy

Four master calligraphers were revered during this time. They are 苏轼/蘇軾, 黄庭坚/黃庭堅/huáng tíng jiān, 米芾/mǐ fú, and 蔡襄/cài xiāng.

Su Shi (苏轼/蘇軾, 1037-1101), also known as Su Dongpo (苏东坡/蘇東坡), was a well-known writer, painter and calligrapher. He combined the technique of painting with that of calligraphy, emphasizing freehand brushwork that could express his own impression or mood. His thinking was that, like a person, the essentials of good calligraphy should include the soul, flesh, bone, blood, and vital energy. A beginner should first learn to write in regular script, he claimed, so as to gain solid mastery of other styles of calligraphy. This view has been widely acknowledged even today. Representative Su's works include 寒食帖 (*Inscription of Hanshi*) (Figure 1), 赤壁赋/赤壁賦/chì bì fù (*Red Cliff Rhapsody*), etc.

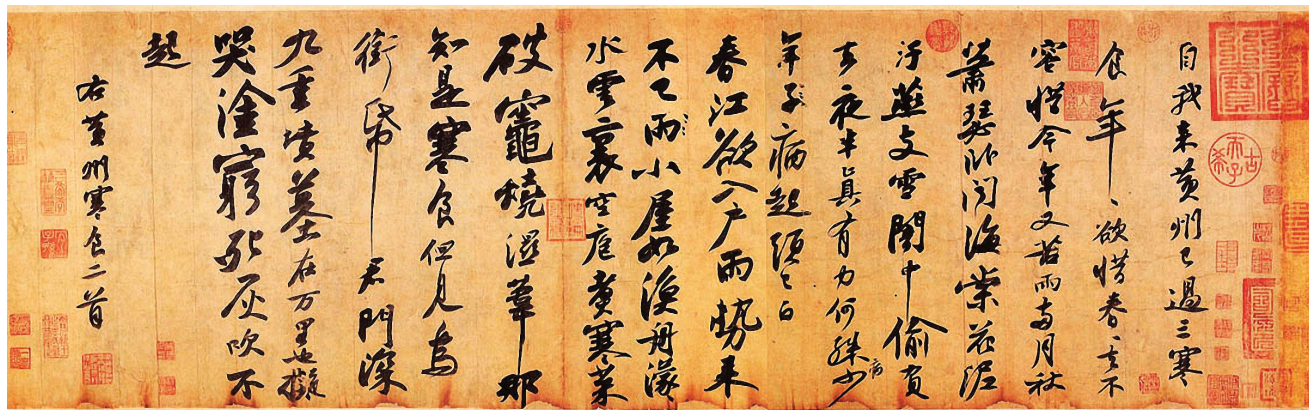


Figure 1: 寒食帖 by 苏轼/蘇軾

Mi Fu (米芾/mǐ fú) (1051-1107) was a great calligrapher, calligraphy critic, and a painter known for landscape drawings and character sketches. As a calligrapher, he held a mastery of all writing styles. His representative works include the 蜀素帖/shǔ sù tiè (*Poem of Shu Su*) (Figure 2), 瑞松图/瑞松圖/ruì and sōng tú (*Poem of Picturesque Pavilion*) (Figure 3), etc. As a calligraphy critic, his works such as the 书史/書史/shū shǐ (*History of Calligraphy*) show deep insight into the essence of calligraphy. For example, Mi Fu suggested that one should always study authentic ancient calligraphy rather than copying rubbings from stone inscriptions.

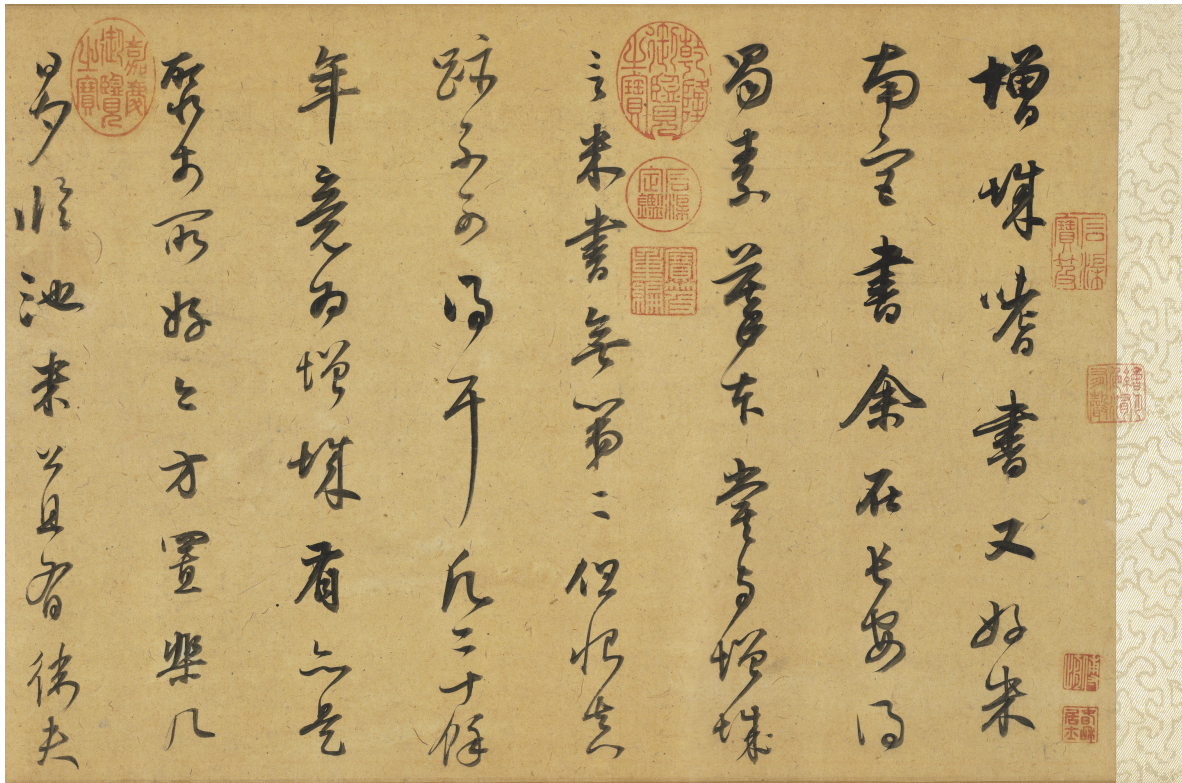


Figure 2: 蜀素帖 (Part) by Mi Fu



Figure 3: 瑞松图/瑞松圖 by Mi Fu

In addition, Emperor Huizong (宋徽宗/sòng huī zōng, 1082-1135) of the *Northern Song*, although politically fatuous and incompetent, was also a calligrapher and painter of great reputation. He originated the 瘦金体/瘦金體/shòu jīn tǐ (*Skinny Golden Style*) featuring thin, sturdy strokes in contrast to conventional norms (Figure 4).



Figure 4: 瘦金体/瘦金體 by Emperor Huizong

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Calligraphy Techniques

圆笔/圓筆/*yuán bǐ* and 方笔/方筆/*fāng bǐ* are a pair of related techniques that reflect *Yin* and *Yang* in order. When should 圆笔/圓筆 or 方笔/方筆 be used in a character or piece of calligraphy? A general principal is to maintain a good balance between *Yin* and *Yang*.

1.1 Round-shaped Strokes 圆笔/圓筆

圆笔/圓筆 refers to a stroke part that is to be written in a round shape. These parts can form the beginning, ending, or a particular turning. The 圆笔/圓筆 can be made in two ways. The beginning or ending of a stroke can be done with concealed tips (藏锋/藏鋒/*cáng fēng*), the turn by writing a smooth curve. See the circled stroke parts in figure 5.

1.2 Square-shaped Strokes 方笔/方筆

方笔/方筆 is a stroke shape that takes in a square-like form. Being angular or sharper, 方笔/方筆 happens also at the beginning, turning, and ending parts of a stroke. To produce a 方笔/方筆 beginning or ending, the brush doesn't need a backward stroke. See the squared stroke parts in Figure 5.

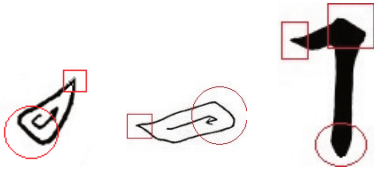
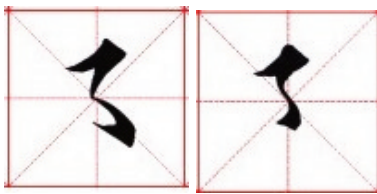


Figure 5: 圆笔/圓筆 and 方笔/方筆

2 Stroke Writing

These two strokes are each part of a radical. To write both strokes well, a calligrapher should start with a short 方笔/方筆 horizontal, then make a 方笔/方筆 turn, and complete the rest.



3 Characters

3.1 Stroke Order

Arch Chinese lists 12 rules of Chinese character writing order. Below is Rule 12:

Rule 12: Inside before bottom enclosing (e.g., 近, 送, and 巡)

For details, visit the Arch Chinese website. Yellowbridge Online Dictionary can also provide additional information.

3.2 Characters

限/xiàn/limit; 近/jìn/near; 邪/xié/evil

3.3 Sample Calligraphy Characters



3.4 Writing by following rules

- Prepare tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for proper posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

4.1 Write the following characters:

巡/xún/patrol; 送/sòng/to send; 都dōu/all, both; dū/capital; 陪/péi/to accompany



4.2 Search on line to find out how to apply an *Yin-Yang* balance to Chinese calligraphy writing.

Part III. Additional Resources

1. Northern Song Dynasty: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/nsong/hd_nsong.htm
2. Mi Fu: <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/calligraphy-mi-fu.php>
3. Song Dynasty Art, Painting and Calligraphy: <http://factsanddetails.com/china/cat2/4sub9/entry-5478.html>
4. Calligraphy in Five Dynasties, Northern and Southern Song Dynasties: http://treasure.chinesecio.com/en/article/2009-08/25/content_12809.htm

Calligraphy in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing Dynasties

This chapter focuses on the mastery calligraphers attained during the Yuan, Ming and Qing Dynasties and their unique styles that often evoked ancient writings. In particular, seal and clerical script became sources of inspiration.

Part I. Culture

1 Calligraphy during the *Yuan*, *Ming*, and *Qing* Dynasties

1.1 The *Yuan* (元/*yuán*) (1279-1368)

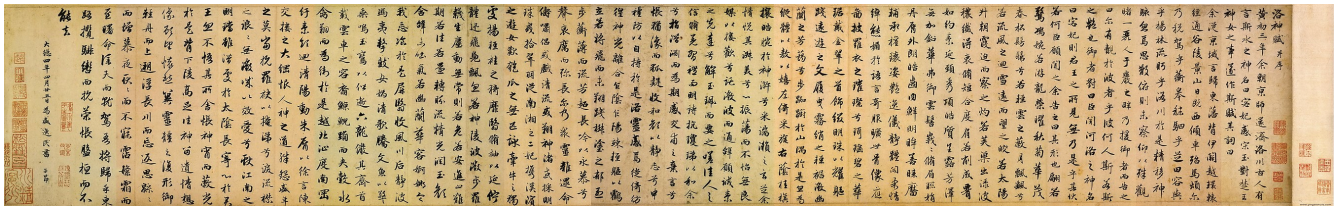


Figure 1: 洛神賦/洛神賦/*luò shén fù*, Tale of the Goddess of Luo River

The *Yuan* Dynasty, 元/*yuán*, was the empire or ruling dynasty of China that Kublai Khan, the fierce leader of Mongolia, established. In governing, *Yuan* emperors tried to hold true to traditional Chinese practices – to maintain harmony and improve the quality of domestic life. Major developments took place in the arts, including painting, calligraphy, poetry, and *Qu* (曲/*qǔ*, a type of classical Chinese poetry that consists of words written in one particular tone pattern developed from songs). The number of gifted artists and writers was noteworthy. For instance, Zhao Mengfu (趙孟頫/*zhào mèng fǔ*, 1254-1322), a descendant of the *Song*’s imperial family, was considered a significant Chinese scholar, painter, and calligrapher. Figures 1 and 2 show examples of his calligraphy and painting.



Figure 2: 二羊图/二羊圖/èr yáng tú (A Sheep and A Goat)

1.2 Ming Dynasty (明) (1368-1644)



Figure 3: Painting and calligraphy by 文徵明/文徵明

During the *Ming* (明/míng) Dynasty artists frequently broke with tradition, exhibiting a free, liberated, diverse style of calligraphy. And they were also accomplished in painting, writing and poetry. The most famous artists included Wen Zhengming (文徵明/wén zhēng míng, 1470-1559), Zhu Yunming (祝允明/zhù yǔn míng, 1460-1527), Shen Zhou (沈周/shěn zhōu, 1427-1509), Tang Yin (唐寅/táng yín, 1470-1523), Dong Qichang (董其昌/dǒng qí chāng, 1555-1636), Xu Zhenqing (徐祯卿/徐禎卿/xú zhēn qīng, 1479-1511), and Huang Daozhou (黄道周/huáng dào zhōu, 1585-1646) among others. Figure 3 consists of two pieces of artwork by 文徵明/文徵明.

1.3 Qing Dynasty (清) (1644-1911)



Figure 4: Calligraphy in seal script by 邓石如/鄧石如

Starting in the *Qing* (清/qīng), scholars increasingly were inspired by the rich resources of overlooked ancient seal and clerical script inscriptions. Influenced by a close study of these antiquities, *Qing* scholars became familiar with stelae. In doing so they helped to create a trend in calligraphy that complemented what is known as the *Modelbook School*. Thus, this *Stelae School* formed yet another link between past and present. Seal and clerical script became sources of innovation in Chinese calligraphy. Notable calligraphers from this period include Deng Shiru (邓石如/鄧石如/dèng shí rú, 1743-1805) (See Figure 4 for his calligraphy work) and Zhao Zhiqian (赵之谦/趙之謙/zhào zhī qiān, 1829-1884) (See Figure 5 for his calligraphy).

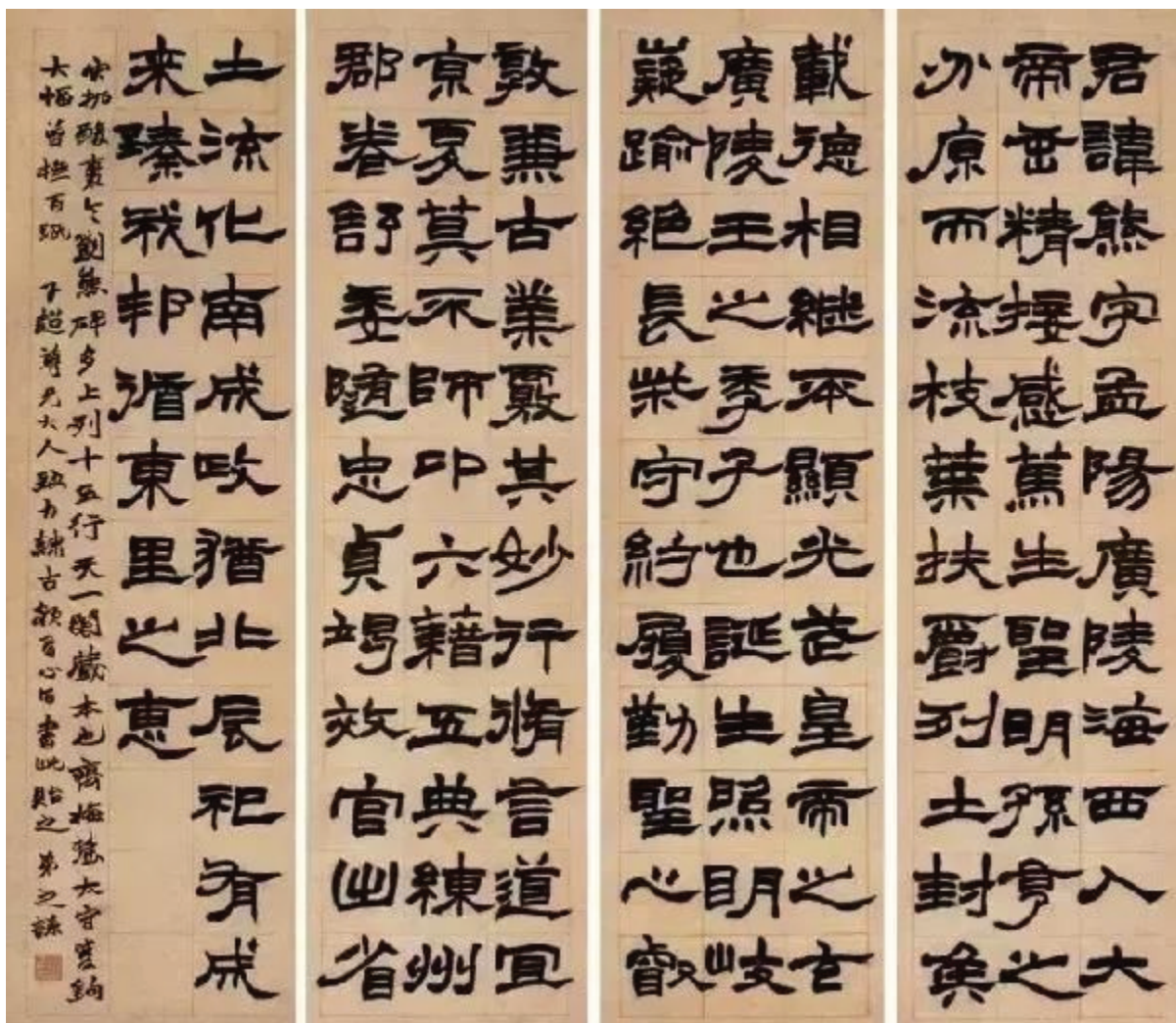


Figure 5: Calligraphy in clerical script by 赵之谦/趙之謙

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Strokes

This pair consists of two intricate strokes in which 3-to-4 turns are required. Calligraphers must make the turns by changing directions properly.



2 Characters

延/yán/ to extend



3 Homework

3.1 Write the following Character: 建/jiàn/to build



3.2 Find how to write your Chinese name in regular style and practice under a teacher's guidance.

3.3 If you don't yet have a Chinese name, ask your teacher for help with characters, pronunciation, meaning, and stroke order.

Turn to a website to help you write your name using proper calligraphic rules. One site is: 永樂在线書法字典 Chinese calligraphy dictionary online (<http://chinese-calligraphy-dictionary.wikichina.com/>).

Part III. Additional Resources

1. Chinese Calligraphy: <http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/calligraphy.php>
2. Chinese calligraphy: <http://www.seeraa.com/china-culture/chinese-calligraphy-introduction.html>
3. Principles of Chinese Calligraphy: <http://www.art-virtue.com/principles/p9-linmo.htm>

Chinese Calligraphy in the Republican Period

This chapter focuses on the past century of calligraphy's development and includes generally accepted rules that can “personalize” calligraphy through an artist's use of running script.

Part I. Culture

1 Chinese Calligraphy in the Republican Period

The Republic of China (中华民国/中華民國/zhōng huá mín guó) (1912-present) overthrew the Qing in 1911 and thus launched the *Republican Period*. With the Qing's fall, the *New Culture Movement* began, one that defied every facet of traditionalism. The status quo in Chinese was impossible to maintain as civil war ensued between the Kuomintang (the nationalists) and the Communist Party of China. Further chaos ensued during the Second Sino-Japanese War. Somehow surviving through this upheaval, artists began to integrate Western art techniques and perspectives into traditional Chinese painting. In 1949, with the founding of The People's Republic of China in the mainland, the new government guided art forms. Nearly two decades later, the most earthshaking impact of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was “*Destruction of the Four Olds*,” with major consequences for pottery, painting, literature, art, architecture, and more. From the 1980's onward, art forms became increasingly diverse. Calligraphy and painting revived amid widespread popularity. Famous calligraphers and painters during this period are Wu Changshuo (吴昌硕/吳昌碩) (1844-1927), Huang Binhong (黄宾虹/黃賓虹) (1865-1955), Yu You-Ren (于右任/於右任) (1879-1964), Shen Yinmo (沈尹默) (1883年—1971), Xu Beihong (徐悲鸿/徐悲鴻) (1895–1953), Lin Sanzhi (林散之) (1898-1989), Zhang Daqian (张大千/張大千) (1899–1983), Fu Baoshi (傅抱石) (1904–1965), Li Keran (李可染) (1907-1989), Zhao Puchu (赵朴初/趙樸初) (1907-2000), Qigong (启功/啓功) (1912-2005), Wang Jing-Zhi (王静芝/王靜芝) (1916-2002), and Liu Bing-Nan (刘炳南/劉炳南) (1924-). See Figure 1 for painting by Qi Baishi, Figure 2 for calligraphy by Qigong, and Figure 3 for painting by Li Keran.



Figure 1: Painting by Qi Baishi



Figure 2: Calligraphy in running script by Qigong



Figure 3: Painting by Li Keran

2 Calligraphy or Painting Inscriptions

Once an artist completes the main content of a painting or calligraphy piece, the individual normally will provide inscriptions. These could include the source of the main content of the artwork; recipients of the piece; date; signature; and author's seal. Except for the seal, inscriptions are written in running script. (For a beginner, regular script should be the preferred calligraphy style).

2.1 Date

Instead of the solar calendar, the Chinese use a traditional system to denote years. It's a combination of *Celestial* or *Heavenly Stems* 天干/tiān gān and *Earthly Branches* 地支/dì zhī. Ten *Heavenly Stems*, combined with 12 *Earthly Branches*, form a cycle of 60 years. Each year is given a certain name with one *heavenly* stem and one *earthly* branch (Table 1). Traditionally, calligraphy, painting, and other art forms are dated with a particular year's name. Nowadays people also accept modern-era dates.

甲子	乙丑	丙寅	丁卯	戊辰	己巳	庚午	辛未	壬申	癸酉
1804	1805	1806	1807	1808	1809	1810	1811	1812	1813
1864	1865	1866	1867	1868	1869	1870	1871	1872	1873
1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933
1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
甲戌	乙亥	丙子	丁丑	戊寅	己卯	庚辰	辛巳	壬午	癸未
1814	1815	1816	1817	1818	1819	1820	1821	1822	1823
1874	1875	1876	1877	1878	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883
1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943
1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
甲申	乙酉	丙戌	丁亥	戊子	己丑	庚寅	辛卯	壬辰	癸巳
1824	1825	1826	1827	1828	1829	1830	1831	1832	1833
1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893
1944	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949	1950	1951	1952	1953
2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
甲午	乙未	丙申	丁酉	戊戌	己亥	庚子	辛丑	壬寅	癸卯
1834	1835	1836	1837	1838	1839	1840	1841	1842	1843
1894	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903
1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1963
2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
甲辰	乙巳	丙午	丁未	戊申	己酉	庚戌	辛亥	壬子	癸丑
1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853
1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
甲寅	乙卯	丙辰	丁巳	戊午	己未	庚申	辛酉	壬戌	癸亥
1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	1862	1863
1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
2034	2035	2036	2037	2038	2039	2040	2041	2042	2043

Table 1: Four cycle calendar of the 60-year round named with Heavenly Stems and Earthly Branches (in red). Adapted from <https://www.cchatty.com/article/Heavenly-Stems-and-Earthly-Branches>.

In general, information of a particular year is sufficient to date a work of art. To provide more specifics about a date, artists might include information about a season. The four seasons in Chinese are 春/chūn (spring), 夏/xià (summer), 秋/qiū (fall), and 冬/dōng (winter). Each season should be used together with 月/yuè (month) or 日/rì (day) to indicate the month and season in which an artist has finished the piece. A seasonal plant may also indicate a date.

2.2 Seal

A seal (印/yìn) is normally written in seal script. It is not just the mark of ownership; it also has become the essential element in the piece because its red color is so prominent on a normally black-and-white rendering. The artist may use one seal or two different ones on one piece.

Figure 4 is a piece of calligraphy created by contemporary calligrapher Tian Yunzhang with basic inscriptions.



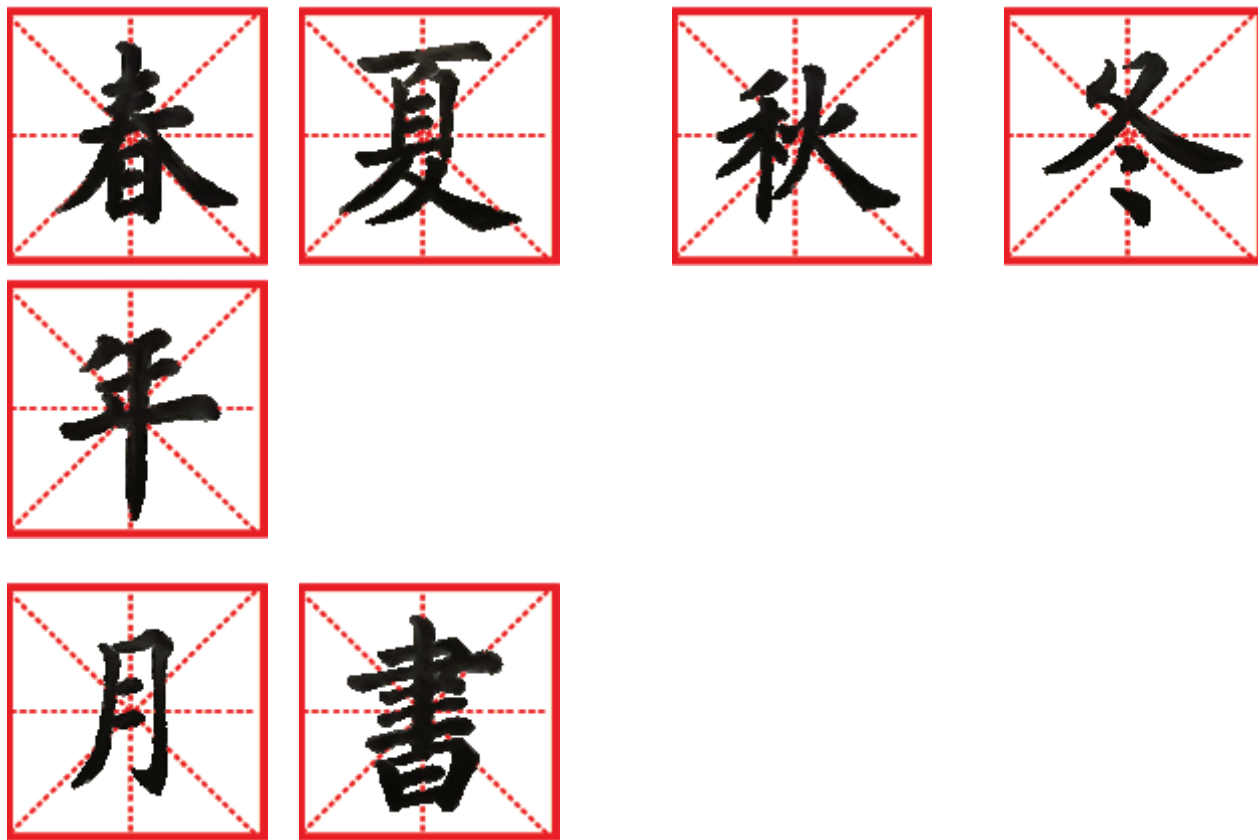
Figure 4 Calligraphy in regular script with the date (circled in red), signature (circled in green), and seals (circled in purple). Adapted from <http://wemedia.ifeng.com/47900139/wemedia.shtml>.

Part II. Calligraphy Writing

1 Characters

年/nián (year), 春/chūn (spring), 夏/xià (summer), 秋/qiū (fall), 冬/dōng (winter), 月/yuè (month; moon), 書/shū (to write; book)

2 Sample Calligraphy Characters



3 Writing by following rules

- Prepare tools and materials.
- Start to write under instruction.
- Be aware of rules for proper posture and stroke order.

4 Homework

- 4.1 Write one piece of calligraphy work assigned by the teacher.
- 4.2 Research the importance of calligraphy in Chinese culture.
- 4.3 Research the relationship between Chinese calligraphy and other art forms.
- 4.4 Research the influence of Chinese calligraphy in other Asian countries such as Japan and Korea.

Part III. Additional Resources

- 1. The effects of Chinese calligraphy handwriting and relaxation training:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0020748909003502>
- 2. Chinese calligraphy and Health: <http://www.doc88.com/p-1052865591929.html>

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Huiwen Li (李惠文), Doctor of Education; Chinese calligraphy practitioner and educator; President of American Society of Shufa Calligraphy Education (ASSCE, 美國書法教育學會) (2018-2020); and head teacher and adjunct professor at Cleveland State University. At American universities Dr. Li teaches Chinese calligraphy, Chinese language and linguistics, and is deeply involved in educational research. He also has shared his expertise in calligraphy through research publications, presentations, and demonstrations with educators, practitioners, and learners.

Han Lifan (韩丽芬), visiting professor at Cleveland State University. Ms. Han taught Chinese calligraphy and Chinese language and culture at the collegiate and adult-learner levels through the auspices of the Cleveland Public Library and the CSU Confucius Institute. She has also participated in many widely popular calligraphy outreach programs for public school learners and presented research at numerous forums and conferences.

George Becker (贝可平), Chinese calligraphy practitioner. Over a career of more than 45 years, Mr. Becker has written for global news organizations and counseled China-based and U.S. companies in marketing and branding. He has had a keen, lifelong interest in Chinese history, culture and language.