



## LESSON B.9

# WRITING CHINESE CHARACTERS

写汉字 XIĚ HÀNZÌ

# LESSON B.8 REVISION

2

Construct words/phrases from the below characters:



感  
gǎn

戴  
dài

多喝水  
duō

不  
bú

流  
liú

打  
dǎ

发  
fā

勤  
qín

洗手  
xǐshǒu

鼻水  
bíshuǐ

冒  
mào

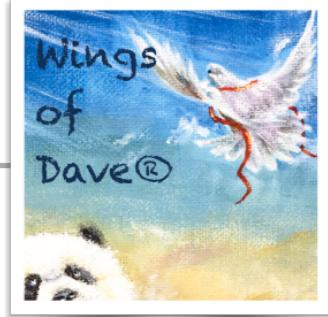
口罩  
kǒuzhào

舒服  
shūfú

烧  
shāo

喝水  
hē shuǐ

喷嚏  
pēntì

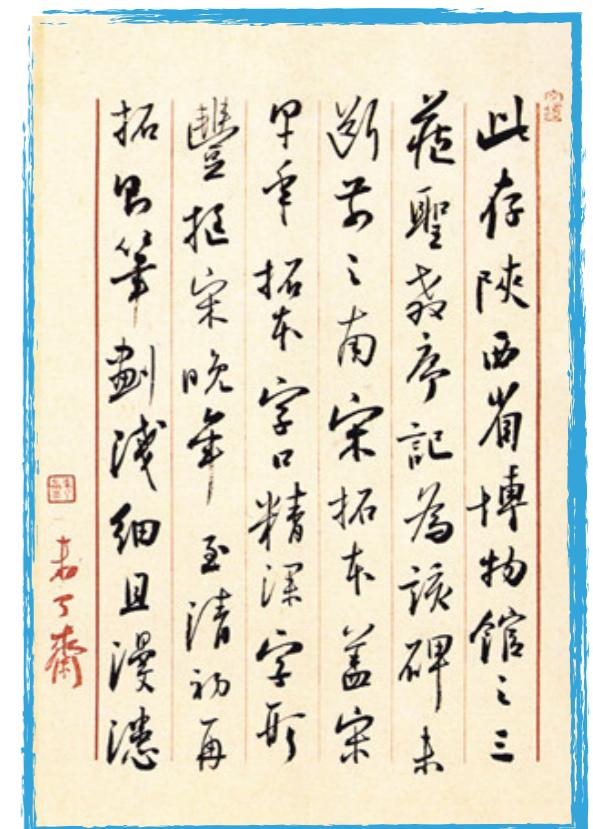


## How many characters are there?

- Altogether there are over **50,000** characters, though many are very rare.
- A comprehensive modern dictionary **字典** (zìdiǎn) will rarely list over 20,000 in use.
- An average educated Chinese person would know 4,000 - 5,000 characters.
- You would only need about 2,000 - 3,000 to be able to read a newspaper.
- English has over 170,000 words. However, combinations of Chinese characters create new meanings and generate stream of wonderful words.

## Layout

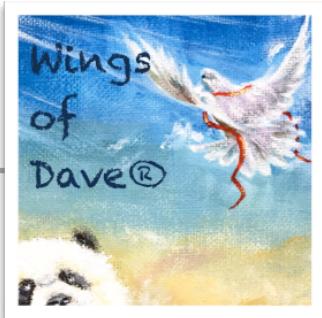
- Traditionally Chinese characters have been laid out **from top to bottom 从上到下** (cóng shàng dào xià), **from right to left 从右到左** (cóng yòu dào zuǒ).
- However, most modern publications follow the Western way.



# FOUR TREASURES OF THE STUDY

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## 文房四宝 *wén fáng sì bǎo*



- **Four Treasures of the Study** 文房四宝 (*wén fáng sì bǎo*) is an expression used to refer to the rice paper (xuan paper), brush, inkstick and inkstone used in Chinese calligraphy and painting. Collectively they are called 纸笔墨砚 (*zhǐ bì mò yàn*).
- The name stems from the time of the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-589 AD).
- Other "Treasures" include brush rest, brush hanger, paperweight, brush rinsing pot, water spoon, seal, and seal-ink.



**Xuan Paper**  
宣纸  
*xuānzhǐ*



**Brush**  
毛笔  
*máobì*



**Inkstick**  
墨  
*mò*



**Inkstone**  
砚  
*yàn*

# CHINESE ORACLE BONE SCRIPT



- The basic Chinese writings are evolved from the oracle bone script. Over time, new characters were added to depict complex meanings.



人	男	女	子	夫	妻	王	口
rén	nán	nǚ	zi	fu	qī	wáng	kǒu
person	man	woman	child	husband	wife	king	mouth
目	耳	心	日	月	山	雨	田
mù	ěr	xīn	rì	yuè	shān	yǔ	tián
eye	ear	heart	sun	moon	mountain	rain	field
土	水	火	貝	大	小	上	下
tǔ	water	huǒ	bèi	dà	xiǎo	shàng	xià
earth		fire	cowrie shell	big	small	above	below
力	中	又	好	肉	出	刀	南
lì	zhōng	yòu	hǎo	ròu	chū	dāo	nán
strength	middle	also	good	meat	to go out	knife	south

# CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

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- Chinese calligraphy 书法 (*shūfǎ*) has a long history and lasts about 1000 years. It can be considered as a unique **artistic** form of the Chinese culture.
- The traditional calligraphy mainly falls into five scripts as below. These styles are intrinsically linked to the Chinese history.



Seal script	Clerical script	Cursive script/ Grass script	Running script	Regular script/ Standard
篆书	隶书	草书	行书	楷书
<i>zhuànshū</i>	<i>lìshū</i>	<i>cǎoshū</i>	<i>hángshū</i>	<i>kǎishū</i>

- Like Western typography (e.g. Times New Roman, Arial), there are various Chinese typefaces used in **printing and computing**.
- Inevitably, most learners nowadays learn and practise Chinese writing based on **computer typefaces**, rather than traditional calligraphy.
- In practice, our handwriting is much free and reflective of each individual **styles** 风格 (*fēnggé*) which are highly promoted in Chinese education. An individualistic handwriting represents one's unique **character** 性格 (*xìnggé*) and artistic **taste** 品味 (*pǐnwèi*).



## 1. Ming or Song Typeface - on paper

- Ming typeface 明体 (*míngtǐ*) or Song typeface 宋体 (*sòngtǐ*) is mainly used to display printed Chinese characters in newspapers and books. It replicates **various thickness** of brushstroke.



## 2. Gothic Typeface - on screen

- Gothic typeface 黑体 (*hēitǐ*) is mainly used in computer typing and is characterized by strokes of **even thickness** and lack of decorations akin to **sans serif** styles in Western typography.
- Similar to sans-serif, Ming/Song typefaces were designed for printing, but they were also designed for **legibility**. They are commonly used in headlines, signs, and video applications.

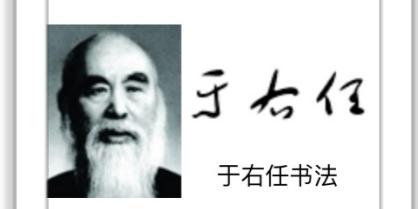


# FIND YOUR UNIQUE STYLES

- Appreciate some examples of handwriting from famous people.
- Their unique styles have been highly recognized and are popularly used for study and practice.
- <http://www.akuziti.com/mb/>



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# FIT IN THE SQUARE



- When you write each character, imagine you are writing it inside a **square** 方格 (*fāng gé*).
- To begin, practice on a squared paper in a grid. There are two popular grid formats (see appendix):

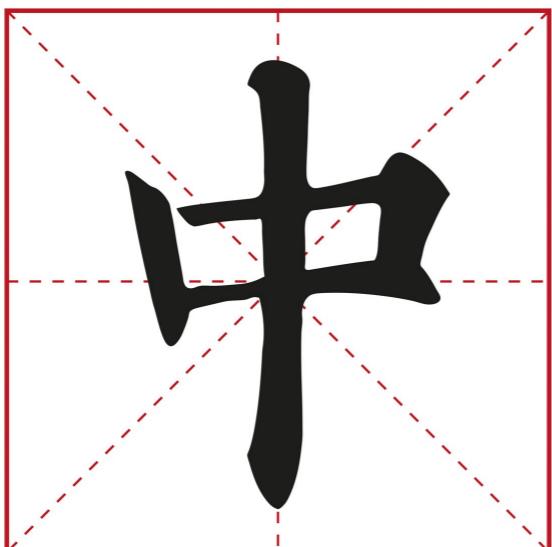
1. **Rice Word Grid** 米字格 (*mǐ zì gé*) is most commonly used as Chinese calligraphy practice template. As the name suggests, the shape of the grid looks like the Chinese character for rice 米.

[http://chineseprintables.com/paper/rice\\_A4.pdf](http://chineseprintables.com/paper/rice_A4.pdf)

2. **Field Word Grid** 田字格 (*tián zì gé*), as you might expect, the corresponding Chinese character 田 represents the rice field with grid.

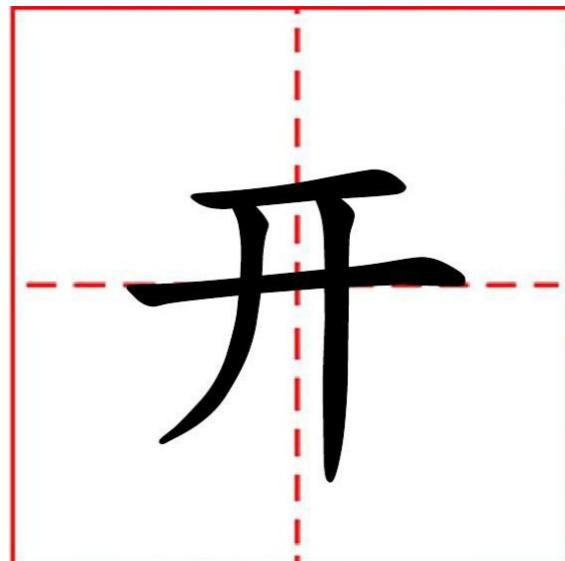
[http://chineseprintables.com/paper/field\\_A4.pdf](http://chineseprintables.com/paper/field_A4.pdf)

- Each character needs to be **evenly spaced, balanced** and fit into **equal-sized** segments. Some characters look **symmetrical**.



Rice Word Grid:

Middle 中  
*zhōng*



Field Word Grid:

Open 开  
*kāi*

# Appendix – Holding a Chinese Calligraphy Brush

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- To practice Chinese calligraphy, one must learn the proper way of holding the **brush** 毛笔 (*máobi*):

1. Grasp it firmly between the thumb and first two fingers. Keep the ring finger (the fourth) lightly behind the brush as a balance.

2. Keep the brush in a **vertical position** 垂直位置 (*chuízhí wèizhì*).

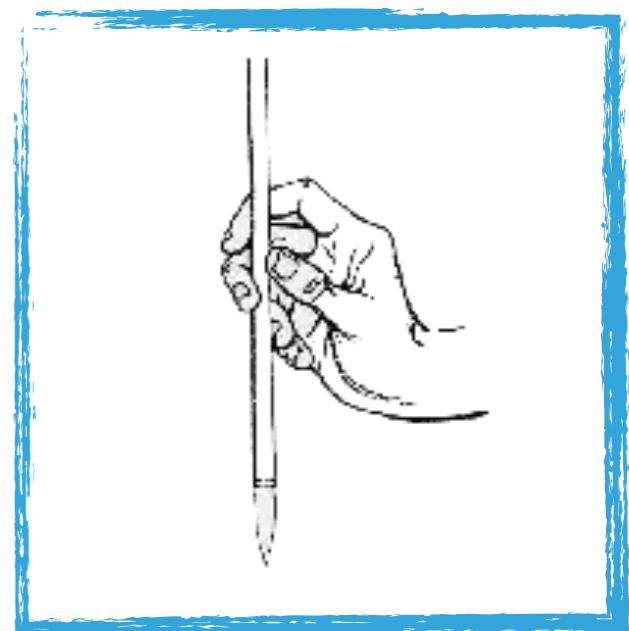
3. Keep your elbow above the table.

- Besides the **fingers** 手指 (*shǒuzhǐ*), one must learn how to use the **wrist** 手腕 (*shǒuwàn*) and **elbow** 肘部 (*zhǒu bù*) while writing. Use the wrist to manipulate the tip of the brush and the elbow for the various directions of brush strokes.

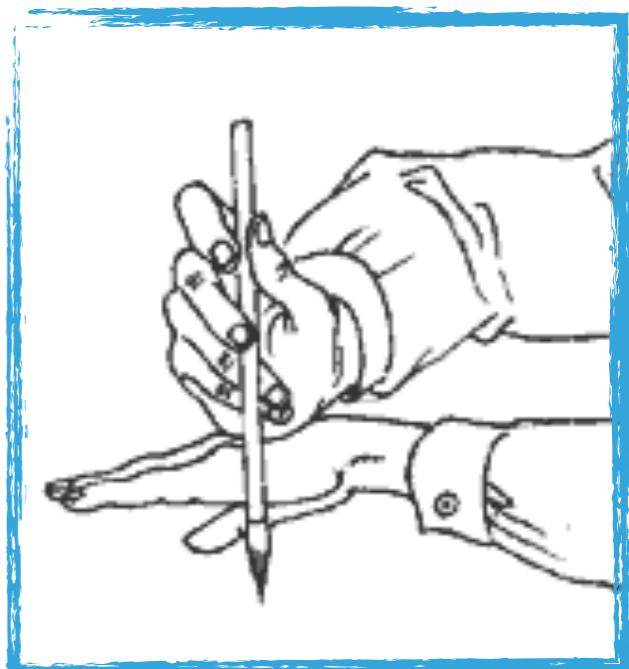
- By holding the brush strictly upright, you can use the entire **tip** of the brush when you write rather than just the **side** of it as when you hold it like a pen or pencil.

- A **brushstroke** 笔触 (*bǐchù*) can reveal the individuality and style of the person.

- Chinese artists often apply calligraphic styles and techniques in **painting** 绘画 (*huìhuà*)



Holding the brush upright



Supported wrist method



**jīn bù huàn**

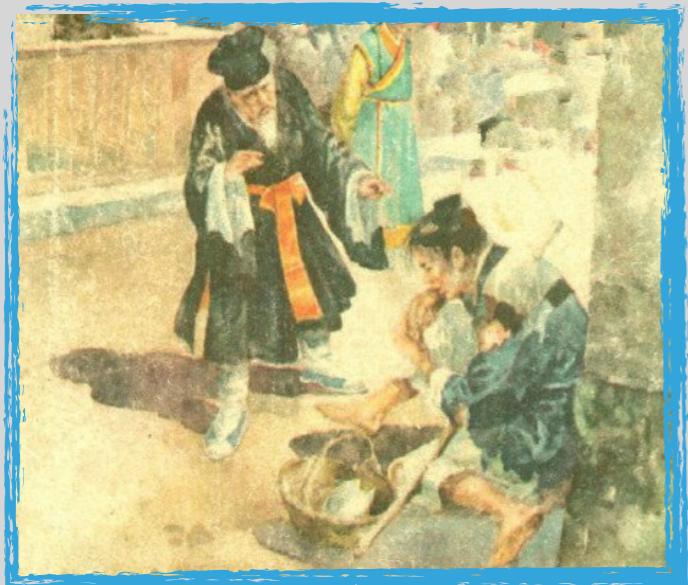
**"Not to be exchanged even for gold."**

## What does it mean?

- Describe something very precious, even beyond the value of gold. Literally it is priceless, not for all the tea in China!

## How is it used?

- This idiom is used to describe a beloved item or an honourable deed that is beyond any measurement. The example here is an **inkstick**.



**浪子回头金不换**

(làngzǐ huítóu jīn bù huàn)

- This is an extended idiom: "A prodigal son returned home is worth more than gold."
- It is rare when someone who has gone astray turns over a new leaf. Let's celebrate it with open arms.

**Gold**

**金  
jīn**

**No**

**不  
bù**

**Exchange**

**换  
huàn**

# SONG - HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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<https://youtu.be/ckjD6YuXOy0?feature=shared>



Wish you happy birthday

祝你生日快乐

*zhù nǐ shēngrì kuàilè*

birthday cake

生日蛋糕

*shēngrì dànghāo*

birthday present

生日礼物

*shēngrì lǐwù*

birthday party

生日派对

*shēngrì pàiduì*

Wish you happiness and good health

祝你幸福, 祝你健康

*zhù nǐ xìngfú, zhù nǐ jiànkāng*

Wish you a bright future

祝你前途光明

*zhù nǐ qiántú guāngmíng*

Have a warm family

有个温暖家庭

*yǒu gè wēnnuǎn jiātíng*

# CLASSROOM EXERCISE B.9

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**Write your name in Chinese.**

