

Huang and Ziethen

Elementary Chinese Characters and Vocabulary 1

Workbook in Preparation of the
New HSK 1 Exam

1st Edition



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Table of Contents

Table of Contents	3
Classification of the Characters.....	4
Writing Chinese Characters.....	8
01 Personal Pronouns	10
02 Numbers	14
03 Adjectives	20
04 Food and Drink	27
05 Family and Friends	32
06 Titles and Occupations	37
07 Positions and Locations.....	42
08 Nature and the Cosmos.....	48
09 Verbs (1).....	53
10 Time (1)	59
11 Time (2)	65
12 Verbs (2).....	69
13 Places	76
14 Terms and Items (1).....	82
15 Verbs (3).....	89
16 Adverbs and Grammar Particles	96
17 Interrogative Pronouns und Classifiers	103
18 Common Phrases	110
19 Terms and Items (2)	116
Appendix A: Chinese Characters	123
Appendix B: Subject Matter of the HSK 1	127
Appendix C: Glossary.....	130

Classification of the Characters

Those who have overcome the initial hurdles in learning Chinese characters know that they are not arbitrarily constructed; rather, they follow a system of repeating patterns and rules. Recognizing these patterns helps when learning Chinese characters. The purpose of this chapter is to acquaint the reader with several possible such patterns.

The first classification pattern is the separation of the characters according to content. This refers to characters that depict the simplified image of an object, symbolically represent an abstract meaning, or result from a combination of several images or symbols.

The most identifiable classification pattern is the radical. The radical is the classifying part of a character that can also be found in other characters. Characters with the same radical can be arranged in groups.

Both patterns are described in more detail below.

Classification according to Content

If you separate Chinese characters according to content, they can be divided into two main groups: simple characters and compound characters.






A simple character is a character that cannot be broken down any further. It is made up of strokes that together depict an object or an abstract meaning. The group of simple characters that depict objects is, therefore, also referred to as pictograms. The group of simple characters that represent abstract meanings is referred to as simple ideograms.

A compound character is made up of two or more simple characters. Compound characters make up the majority of Chinese characters. They can also be divided into two subgroups. If a compound character has a simple character that alludes to the pronunciation of the compound character, it is referred to as a phono-semantic compound. The remaining compound characters are called compound ideograms.

Thus in terms of content, there are four different kinds of characters: pictograms, simple ideograms, compound ideograms, and phono-semantic compounds.





Pictograms

A pictogram is a symbol that represents a physical object. In early written Chinese, these symbols were very realistic in their drawings. As the written language developed, these characters became more and more abstract. However, there is still a vague resemblance of the character to the physical object symbolized. Thus, these characters are particularly easy to learn. A few examples are detailed in the following table:

Old Form	New Form	Pinyin	Meaning
	山	shān	mountain
	月	yuè	moon
	水	shuǐ	water
	日	rì	sun
	人	rén	person

Simple Ideograms

A simple ideogram is a graphic representation of an object or meaning, the significance of which is not immediately apparent. It is, therefore, important to learn how these characters are to be read. Simple ideograms can, therefore, describe a larger range of words than pictograms. A few examples are detailed in the following table:

Old Form	New Form	Pinyin	Meaning
	上	shàng	above, up
	下	xià	below, down
	五	wǔ	five
	八	bā	eight

Compound Ideograms

A compound ideogram is a combination of two or more characters or ideograms that has a specified meaning. A compound ideogram can symbolize an abstract meaning, such as, for example, a feeling. It can also, however, represent a visual image. A few examples are detailed in the following table:

Components	Character	Pinyin	Meaning
人 + 木	休	xiū	person + tree = rest
日 + 月	明	míng	sun + moon = bright
木 + 木	林	lín	two trees = forest
小 + 土	尘	chén	small + earth = dust
水 + 目	泪	lèi	water + eye = tear

Phono-semantic Compounds

A phono-semantic compound is a compound ideogram that consists of two components. One component determines the pronunciation of the character, and the other component determines the meaning of the character. A few examples are detailed in the following table. The highlighted characters determine the pronunciation.

Components	Character	Pinyin	Meaning
女(woman) + 马(mǎ)	妈	mā	mother
汤(tāng) + 火(fire)	烫	tàng	hot
火(fire) + 考(kǎo)	烤	kǎo	to bake
衣(clothes) + 库(kù)	裤	kù	pants
金(metal) + 中(zhōng)	钟	zhōng	bell

Classification according to Radical

Radicals help in the classification and sorting of Chinese characters. The word “radical” is derived from the Latin word “radix” (meaning “root”) and is, therefore, also referred to as the root character. The radical is the basic graphic component of a character. There are a total of approximately 225 radicals. This number varies depending on the dictionary used. The definition of the radical in a character can also vary between dictionaries. Some dictionaries have a character listed under several radicals to make it easier to find the character. Even though there is some discrepancy in the definition of a few radicals, the definition of the majority of Chinese radicals is indisputable. A few examples of radicals and characters are detailed in the following table:

Radical	Meaning	Example	Pinyin	Meaning
口	mouth	喝	hē	to drink
		吃	chī	to eat
亻	person	做	zuò	to do, to make
		他	tā	he
女	woman	妈	mā	mother
		姐	jiě	older sister
艹	grass	茶	chá	tea
		菜	cài	vegetable
犛	claw	狗	gǒu	dog
		猫	māo	cat

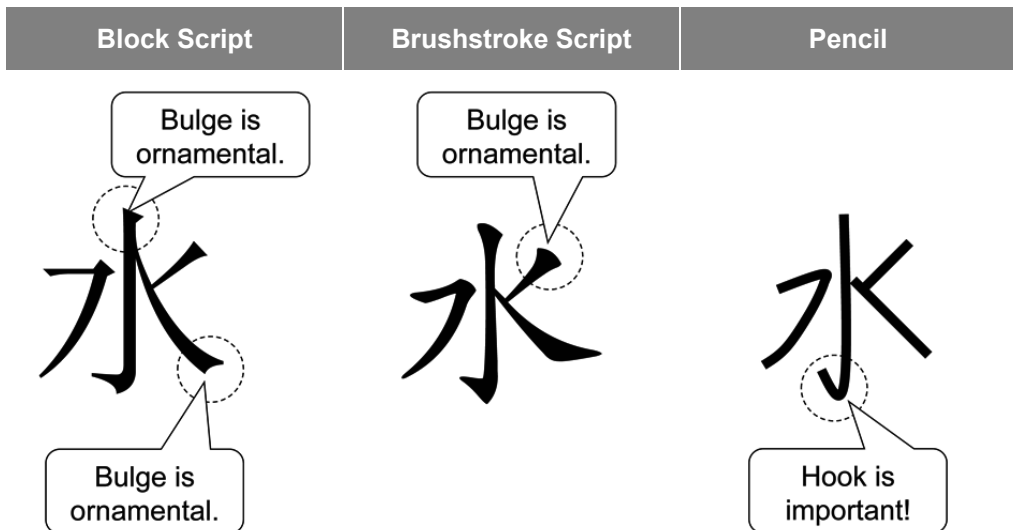
Note: The radicals used in this book have been borrowed from the following sources: “新华写字字典” (商务印书馆, 北京, 2001) and “新汉德词典” (商务印书馆, 北京, 1996).

Writing Chinese Characters

The grammatical rules governing the correct writing (i.e., spelling) of Chinese characters are different from the grammatical rules governing correct English spelling. In Chinese, a character is either complete or incomplete. However, there are a few guidelines with which you should be familiar.

Important Elements

A grammatically correctly written character contains all strokes and important elements. The Chinese characters in this book are either shown in Chinese block script or brushstroke script. Because of the widespread use of pencils, ballpoint pens, and fountain pens in writing, it is essential to know how to correctly form a character. Chinese block script and brushstroke script both have certain features that are difficult to duplicate with Western writing tools. The following illustration should provide clarity in this respect. Whereas artistic embellishment is generally not taken into consideration, a hook at the end of a vertical line is an essential feature of a Chinese character.



The table on the next page shows a few additional examples of writing with a pencil or ballpoint pen.

Block Script	Brushstroke Script	Pencil
你	你	你
好	好	好

The bulges found in both block and brushstroke scripts are not formed when using a pencil. They reveal the direction of the stroke to an experienced writer and are, therefore, found in most Chinese type fonts.

Sequence of Strokes

Each character is made up of several strokes. The order in which the strokes are written is also referred to as the sequence of strokes. The sequence of strokes is important for several reasons:

- The sequence of strokes provides a certain rhythm when writing, making it easier to memorize a character.
- The sequence of strokes provides a character with elegance and beauty.
- The sequence of strokes provides a systematic efficiency when writing with short hand movements.

The sequence of strokes is not standardized in Chinese. Depending on the source, you may come across different sequences. No one way is correct or incorrect. It is simply a recommendation for how to write a character.

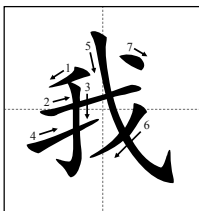
This book follows the model of the most commonly used sequence of strokes. Differing sequences can be implemented as the observer sees fit. Usage is a simple question of preference.

Note: Computer development over the past few years has made it possible to view an animated representation of the sequence of strokes. The algorithm used for this animation shows, of course, only one sequence of strokes. It is used internationally and is often misunderstood as the standard sequence of strokes.

01 Personal Pronouns

Simplified	Radical	Traditional	Pinyin	Meaning
我	戈	我	wǒ	I
你	亻	你	nǐ	you
他	亻	他	tā	he
她	女	她	tā	she
们	亻	們	men	plural particle
谁	讠	誰	shuí / shéi ^{*)}	who

*) Both pronunciations are widely accepted.



wǒ
(I)

我

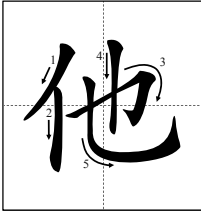
我	我	我			



nǐ
(you)

你

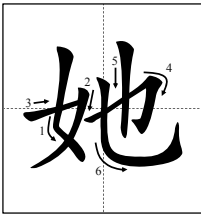
你	你	你			



tā
(he)

他

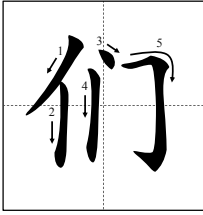
他	他	他			



tā
(she)

她

她	她	她			



men
(plural particle)

们

们	们	们			



shuí / shéi
(who)

谁

谁	谁	谁			

Vocabulary

I
(wǒ)

我							

you
(nǐ)

你							

he
(tā)

他							

she
(tā)

她							

we
(wǒmen)

我	们						

you (pl.)
(nǐmen)

你	们						

they
(tāmen)

他	们						

who
(shuí / shéi)

谁							

Appendix A: Chinese Characters

Appendix A lists the Chinese characters from this book in alphabetical order, including the following information: the Pinyin pronunciation, the character itself, the meaning, and the chapter (C) in which the character was first introduced.

	拼音	字	英语	C		拼音	字	英语	C
A					E				
1.	ài	爱	to love	09	20.	dōu	都	all	16
B					F				
2.	bà	爸	father	05	21.	dú	读	to read, to study	15
3.	bā	八	eight	02	22.	duì	对	correct; face to	18
4.	běi	北	north	13	23.	duō	多	much, many	03
5.	bēi	杯	cup, mug	14	G				
6.	běn	本	root; MW books	17	24.	ér	儿	son, child	05
7.	bù / bú	不	not	16	25.	èr	二	two	02
C					H				
8.	cài	菜	vegetables	04	26.	fàn	饭	cooked rice, meal	04
9.	chá	茶	tea	04	27.	fēi	飞	to fly	19
10.	chē	车	vehicle	13	28.	fēn	分	to divide	11
11.	chī	吃	to eat	04	29.	fú	服	clothes	14
12.	chū	出	out	19	I				
D					J				
13.	dà	大	big	03	30.	gāo	高	high, tall	03
14.	dǎ	打	to hit	15	31.	gè	个	MW pieces	17
15.	de	的	possessive particle	16	32.	gōng	工	to work	15
16.	diàn	店	store	13	33.	gǒu	狗	dog	08
17.	diàn	电	electricity	14	34.	guǎn	馆	hall, house	13
18.	diǎn	点	drop, spot	11	35.	guān	关	to close	18
19.	dōng	东	east	14	36.	guó	国	country	13
					37.	guǒ	果	fruit	04

Appendix B: Subject Matter of the HSK 1

1. 名词 – Nouns (63 items)

(1)	jiā 家 Zhōngguó 中国	xuéxiào 学校 Běijīng 北京	fànguǎn 饭馆	shāngdiàn 商店	yīyuàn 医院	huǒchēzhàn 火车站
(2)	shàng 上	xià 下	qiánmiàn 前面	hòumiàn 后面	lǐ 里	
(3)	jīntiān 今天 nián 年 shíhou 时候	míngtiān 明天 yuè 月 fēnzhōng 分钟	zuótiān 昨天 rì 日	shàngwǔ 上午 xīngqī 星期	zhōngwǔ 中午 diǎn 点	xiàwǔ 下午 xiànzài 现在
(4)	bàba 爸爸 tóngxué 同学	māma 妈妈 péngyou 朋友	érzi 儿子 yīshēng 医生	nǚ'ér 女儿 xiānsheng 先生	lǎoshī 老师 xiǎojiě 小姐	xuésheng 学生
(5)	yīfu 衣服 chá 茶 diànnǎo 电脑	shuǐ 水 bēizi 杯子 diànyǐng 电影	cài 菜 qián 钱 tiānqì 天气	mǐfàn 米饭 fēijī 飞机 māo 猫	shuǐguǒ 水果 chūzūchē 出租车 gǒu 狗	píngguǒ 苹果 diànshì 电视 dōngxi 东西
(6)	rén 人 yǐzi 椅子	míngzi 名字	shū 书	Hànyǔ 汉语	zì 字	zhuōzi 桌子

Appendix C: Glossary

A

ài, 爱, to love58

B

bā yuè, 八月, August63

bā, 八, eight19

bàba, 爸爸, dad35

Běijīng, 北京, Beijing.....81

bēizi, 杯子, cup, mug86

běn, 本, MW books.....109

bú kèqì, 不客气,
You are welcome.....114

bù, 不, not.....100

C

cài, 菜, vegetables31

chá, 茶, tea31

chī, 吃, to eat31

chūzūchē, 出租车, taxi .121

D

dǎ diànhuà, 打电话, to
make a telephone call 94

dà, 大, big25

de, 的, possessive particle
.....101

diǎn, 点, spot, drop.....67

diànhuà, 电话,
telephone87

diànnǎo, 电脑,
computer87

diànshì, 电视, television .87

diànyǐng, 电影, movie ..121

dōngxi, 东西, thing,
stuff88

dōu, 都, all.....101

dú, 读, to read aloud,
to study.....93

duìbuqǐ, 对不起,
Excuse me115

duō, 多, much, many.....25

duōdà, 多大, how old...108

duōshǎo, 多少, how
much, how many25

E

èr yuè, 二月, February ...62

èr, 二, two18

érzi, 儿子, son36

F

fànguǎn, 饭馆,
restaurant80

fēijī, 飞机, aeroplane....120

fēnzhōng, 分钟, minute .68

G

gāoxìng, 高兴, happy.....26

gè, 个, piece108

gōngzuò, 工作, to work..95

gǒu, 狗, dog.....52

H

Hànyǔ, 汉语, Chinese
language122

hànzì, 汉字, character..122

hǎo, 好, good25

hé, 和, and, with101

hē, 喝, to drink.....31

hěn, 很, very100

hòumiàn, 后面, behind..46

huì, 会, can.....58

huí, 回, to return.....74

huǒchēzhàn, 火车站,
railway station81

J

jǐ, 几, how many.....107

jiā, 家, family, home.....36

jiào, 叫, to call.....74

jīntiān, 今天, today62

jiǔ yuè, 九月,
September63

jiǔ, 九, nine19

K

kāi, 开, to open94

kàn diànshì, 看电视,
to watch television87

kàn shū, 看书,
to read a book88

kàn, 看, to look, to watch,
to see.....73

Hefei Huang (黄鹤飞) and Dieter Ziethen

Elementary Chinese Characters and Vocabulary 1

Workbook in Preparation of the New HSK 1 Exam

The most fundamental Chinese characters arranged according to theme in one book: Designed especially for beginners, this workbook introduces 178 characters, their radicals, and the order and direction of the required strokes for practice in writing Chinese. Each thematic group of characters is preceded by a table that contains the English meaning, the pinyin pronunciation, the corresponding traditional Chinese character, the radical, and the structure and composition of the characters for a comprehensive overview of all pertinent information.

The selection of characters is based on the list of new HSK 1 vocabulary. To broaden the utility of this workbook in preparation of the new HSK 1 exam, other meanings and uses of the characters appear at the end of each thematic group along with additional pages to practice writing Chinese.

All characters and vocabulary appear in the appendix in alphabetical order and according to meaning and word type for quick reference.

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