

# CALLIGRAPHY – CHINA'S WRITTEN LANGUAGE

## Calligraphy Kit Includes:

4 horsehair brushes	Black ink stick	Chop stamp
red ink paste in porcelain jar	Carved mixing stone	Porcelain mixing bowl and ladle
Porcelain brush stand		

## Dialects

Chinese has two distinct dialects. Mandarin is the most widely used in schools and universities, on TV, radio, and film. Spoken primarily on the main land, Taiwan and Singapore, it is the most useful to learn if you plan to travel in China. Hong Kong generally uses Cantonese.

Interestingly, all Chinese dialects use the same characters. So, a Mandarin speaker cannot understand a Cantonese speaker, but they can both read the same writing. They differ in how they pronounce what they are reading.

## Pinyin and Tone

In 1958 the government added the roman alphabet (Aa, Bb, Cc...) to match the Mandarin pronunciations. This new form of writing Chinese is called Pinyin. It is used in teaching Chinese and entering Chinese words into mobile devices.

The difficulty of turning Chinese characters into Pinyin is that much of the meaning of a word is carried in the tone of each syllable. Each of the four tones change the meaning of the syllable. For example, the syllable with the sound “da” could mean “to hang over something” (first tone: dā), “to answer” (second tone: dá), “to hit” (third tone: dǎ), and “big” (forth tone: dà). The speaker changes the tone of his voice and that determines the spoken word or meaning.

In Pinyin, the tone is indicated by adding accent marks to the top of the vowel or by using the number of the tone after they syllable.

**apple**    ping2 guo3            píng guō

**milk**     niu2 nai3                niú nǎi

To find other Chinese characters, visit one of these English to Chinese dictionaries:

<http://www.chinalanguage.com/dictionaries/ccdict?action=search&mode=english&mode=english>

<http://chineseculture.about.com/library/symbol/blcc.htm>

<http://www.mdbg.net/chindict/chindict.php>

## How to use the kit

Pull out a sheet of specially designed rice paper.

Make ink. Dip the black ink stick into a small amount of water just wetting the tip. Next, grind the stick against the edge of the ink stone (the black dish), adding enough drops of water to form a small pool of black ink. Use the golden dipper to transfer the ink to the small ceramic bowl for easier access with your brush.

Choose a brush. Treat the brush gently to keep the tip's fine point. Store the brush between strokes in the brush holder.

Use the stone chop as a signature. Press the end of the chop in the red paste and then carefully press the painted end on your document. Normally, a chop would include your name and a unique symbol or picture to identify you.

## The Characters

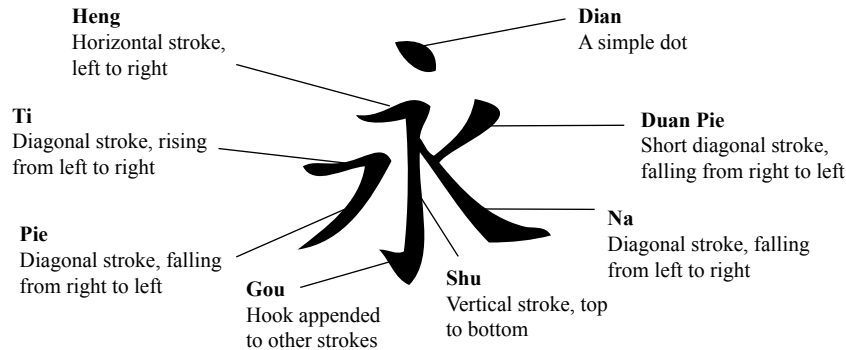
Chinese does not use an alphabet, like in English. Characters represent a full word or part of a word, like a syllable. These characters have developed over thousands of years. Some began as pictures of an object. Even though the character has changed over the years, you can still see that it looks something like the object (e.g. mountain, water, field, mouth). Other characters are formed from compound words: 2 characters put together to mean something new (e.g. sun + moon = bright). Still others are invented, taking the sound or meaning from another character. For example, the character for electricity used the symbol for flash and took it over; flash was given a new character.

Calligraphy is a disciplined art. There are eight basic stroke types and an order in which these strokes must be drawn. Each of these strokes is found in the character for eternity.

## Eternity

Pinyin: yong3 heng2

### The eight basic stroke types



Take some time to look at the characters included in these instructions. Copy them with your calligraphy set.

**Daughter** (simple character)

Pinyin: nv3 er2

**Son**

Pinyin: er2 zi

女儿 儿子

**Mama** (see the repeated sounds)

Pinyin: ma1 ma1

**Mother**

Pinyin: Mu3 qin1

妈妈 母亲

**Dad** (daddy, papa)--see the repeated sounds again

Pinyin: ba4 ba4

**Father**

Pinyin: fu4 qin1

爸爸 父亲

**Cat**

Pinyin: mao1  
(Simplified character)

猫

**Dog**

Pinyin: gou3  
(simplified character)

狗

**Sister**

Pinyin: jie3 mei4  
(note: there are different characters for an older sister or a younger sister, some sources show that the first 2 characters below are for “older sister” and the last 2 characters are for “younger sister”)

姐妹

**Brother**

Pinyin: di4 xiong1  
(Note: there are different characters for an older brother or younger. Some sources show that the first character below is for “older brother” and the last character is for “younger brother”)

兄弟



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