



Moon, Month

Pinyin: Yuè

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Words that use 月:

肯 (consent), 有 (have), 朝 (morning)

in the Chinese Lunar Calendar,
the months are based off
the cycles of the moon.

also "dynasty"

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月 Yuè (moon, month)

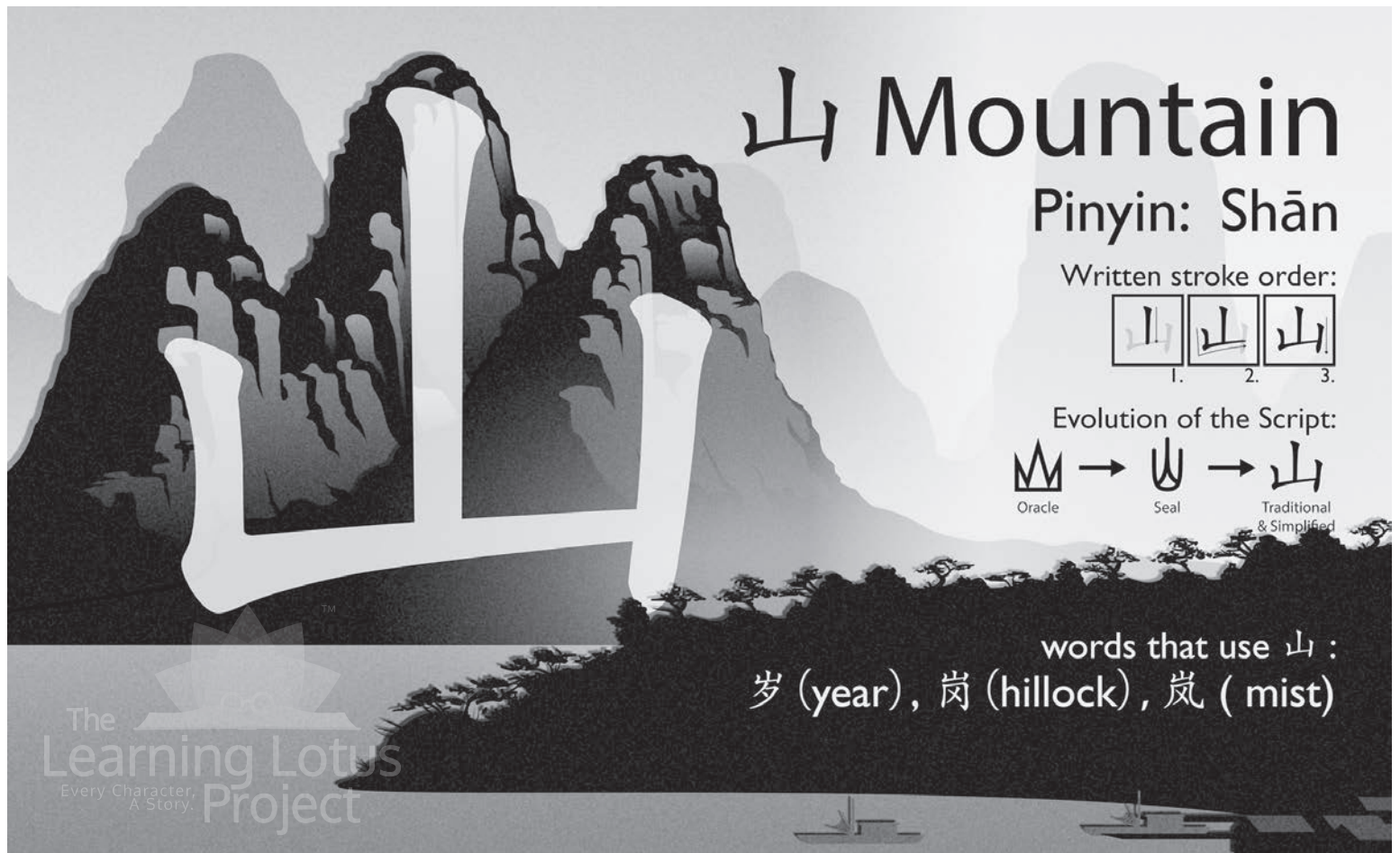
The Oracle script for 月 closely resembles the crescent cycles of our moon. 月 can also mean "Month" because the Chinese Lunar Calendar is based off of the cycles of the moon. Each cycle of the moon is a month, and twelve moon cycles make a year. The Mid-Autumn Festival, or Moon Festival, is an official harvest festival celebrated in China. The festival is held on the 15th of the eighth lunar month in the Chinese calendar, during a full moon.

In Chinese mythology 玉兔 (Yùtù), the Jade Rabbit, lives on the moon and makes the elixir of life for the Moon Goddess 嫦娥 Chang'e. The stories of Chang'e and Jade Rabbit are so integrated in Chinese Culture that China named it's lunar exploration program and lunar rover after them, respectively. During the Apollo 11 Moon landing mission in 1969, Houston CAPCOM shared the Chang'e and Jade Rabbit lore with the Apollo 11 crew to which Buzz Aldrin responded: "Okay. We'll keep a close eye out for the bunny girl."

Many words in Chinese use the 月 radical; 有 (have), 肖 (resemble), 肯 (consent), and 朝 (morning, or dynasty) are just a few.



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山 Shān (mountain)

This character is one of the best examples of a pictograph script in Chinese. It also showcases the importance of the close visual relationship between a character and its appearance in nature. The ridges and shapes of a mountain range are clearly depicted in the oracle script for 山.

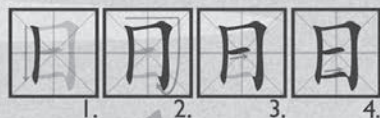
山 is an important setting for many of China's rich cultural stories. During many dynasties, the emperors pilgrimaged to 泰山 (Mount Tai or Taishan) that rises to the east on the Shandong Peninsula, where the plain extends to the sea. There, the emperors carry the most solemn of all the country's sacrifices to Heaven. It is on 泰山 that the emperor received the mandate to rule the country.

山 is an independent character and a radical that is used as a component in many Chinese characters. Some characters use 山 on the top: 岁 (year), 岗 (hillock), 岚 (mist); and, some use 山 on the bottom: 岔 (fork), 岛 (island).

日 Sun, Day

Pinyin: Rì

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 日 :

时 (time), 昨 (Yesterday), 明 (bright), 旦 (dawn),

日 Rì (sun, day)

The shape of the natural sun inspired the earliest written forms of this character. The writing style for 日 has changed over the centuries, gradually transforming into the character used today. We can still imagine the sun when we read 日.

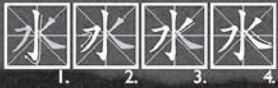
日 has two meanings: "sun" and "day". 日 is also an important radical. It forms many Chinese characters such as 时 (time), 明 (bright, clear), and 早 (early).

“夸父追日” (“Kua Fu Chasing the Sun”) is a famous Chinese fable. The legendary story of Kua Fu, the leader of mighty giants who lived deep in the forest in the North, began when the sun's intense heat dried the rivers, scorched the earth and caused great suffering to the people. To help his people, Kua Fu aspired to catch the sun and tame it. Sadly, Kua Fu was unable to tame the sun and perished trying. But his hard work and determination granted lushness to the Earth. This fable reflects the strong will of the ancient Chinese people to overcome drought. Kua Fu's undying spirit continues to inspire Chinese people today.

水 Water

Pinyin: Shuǐ

Stroke order:



Derived Radical Form : 氵

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Words that use 氵 :

汁 (juice), 汗 (sweat), 江 (river)

水 Shuǐ (water)

The currents, whirlpools and sandbanks of the river are depicted in the Oracle Script for 水. The current script for 水 still conjures a scene you might see when standing on a riverbank, looking over the course of a river. 水 means "water" but it still retains the basic meaning of "river."

The Chinese people have a love and respect for the dual nature that rivers possess. 黄河 (Huánghé), The Yellow River, is referred to as both "Mother River" and "China's Sorrow." As it flows from its source in the Tibetan highlands it becomes thick with sediment which it carries all the way to the Northern Plains, creating 23 square kilometers of new land every year.

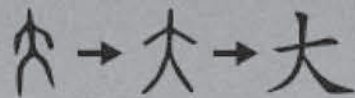
黄河 (Huánghé) has been the cradle of civilization for many Chinese people, it has also been the source of many catastrophic flood disasters throughout history. To this day people still work hard to control the river as it continues to support China.

水 is used as a radical in many Chinese words. When 水 is used as a radical on the left side of a character, it is written "氵", for example 汁 (juice), 汗 (sweat), and 江 (river). The more compact radical is used to better fit in a block with other components.

大 Big, Great

Pinyin: Dà

Evolution of the script:



Oracle

Seal

Traditional
& Simplified

its a big
person

Stroke order:



1.

2.

3.



he once caught
a fish this big

Words that use 大:

奇 (special)

夫 (husband)

天 (heaven)

大 Dà (great)

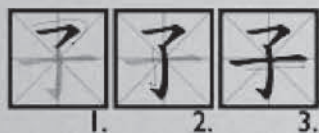
"Big", "Large" and "Great" are abstract concepts, but the ancient Chinese writers were able to use a simple picture to communicate these concepts. The oracle script illustrates an individual standing with legs apart and arms spread out, similar to someone standing large to display prowess.

Many Chinese words use 大 as a radical. Some words use 大 as a radical on top: 奇 (special), 奔 (run). Other characters use it on the bottom: 夫 (husband), 天 (heaven), 尖 (sharp).

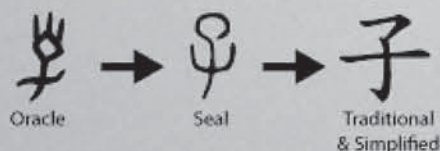
子 Son, Child

Pinyin: Zǐ

Stroke Order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 子:

好 (good), 孙 (grandson)



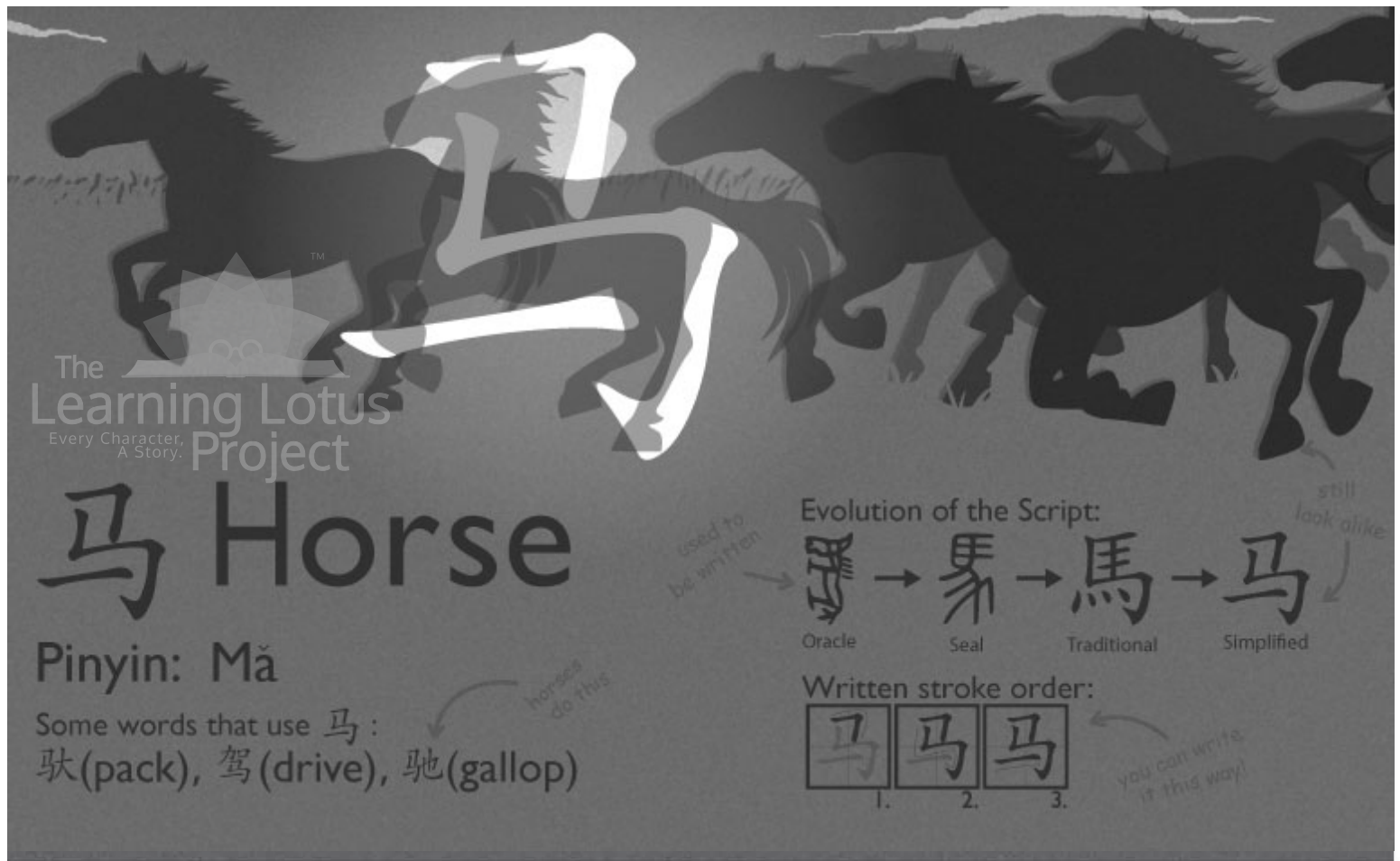
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子 Zǐ (Son, Child)

子 was one of the earliest characters created in the Chinese writing system. In its earliest written form, the character depicts an infant. 子 also means the next generation.

In ancient China, the emperor was considered the son of Heaven and ruled over the whole country. Thus, the characters for emperor are composed of the characters "Heaven" and "Son": 天子. In Chinese culture, we also honor our philosophers using 子, elevating them to the level of an emperor for their wisdom and contributions to society: 孔子 (Confucius), 老子 (Laozi or Lao-Tzu), 孟子 (Mencius).

子 is also a radical. Chinese characters composed with the 子 radical relates to the meaning of "son", "child", or "generation". For example: 孙 means "grandson" or "son of son"



马 Mǎ (Horse)

This character's written form began with the drawing of a horse standing, its mane and tail clearly depicted. A few hundred years later, the character's written form developed into scripts we use today: 馬 (traditional form) and 马 (simplified form). The flowing mane, tail and the four legs are still part of the current character's form.

In Chinese culture, 马 is respected for its hardworking spirit and is an important motif in Chinese mythology. 马 is often referenced in Chinese culture (2014 is the year of the 马) and literature (Lu You's poem "Rainstorm on Nov. 4th") and featured in many Chinese paintings (Xu Beihong's "Galloping Horse").

马 is also a radical and is used to form many different Chinese characters: 驰 (gallop), 驮 (pack), 驻 (resident).

火 Fire

Pinyin: Huǒ

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Words that use 火:

炎 (inflammation), 焱 (flames)
灭 (destroy), 灾 (disaster)

火 Huǒ (Fire)


This character's Oracle Bone form is a simple drawing of a flame. The shape of the flame was tall and jagged like a mountain and the oracle scripts for 火 and 山 reflect this similarity. The modern form of 火 still shares many similarities to the shape of a flame making it an easily recognizable character.

Chinese legend tells of 燧人 (Suiren), the discoverer of fire. In ancient China, before the discovery of fire, people could only eat raw food, illness was rampant, life expectancy was short, people were afraid of the dark, and suffered from the cold. 燧人 climbed mountains and overcame floods and great hardship to obtain fire and bring it back to his people and country. With their new-found fire, the people were able to come out of the darkness and enter the light of civilization. Today, the characters "燧人" also mean a person who makes fire.

火 is a radical component to many Chinese characters. Most characters use 火 on the left: 灯 (light), 焰 (flame), 烟 (smoke). Some characters use 火 on the bottom: 灭 (destroy), 灾 (disaster), 灵 (spirit). Other characters use 火 on the top: 营 (camp), 炎 (inflammation), 焱 (flames).

木 Tree / Wood

Pinyin: Mù

Stroke order: 

Evolution of the script:



Words that use 木:

林(forest), 森(deep forest), 松(pine tree), 棒(stick), 板(board)

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木 Mù (Wood, Tree)

Leaves are not depicted in 木, only trunk, branches and roots. This is especially evident in the Oracle script, where the vertical stroke represents the tree's trunk, the upper strokes represent branches and the bottom strokes are roots. 木 also means "wood" and is a radical component in many Chinese words for things that are made of wood.

Many of the ancient pines or cypress trees in China's Central Plain can only be seen in parks or temples. They are there to remind people of the concept of the tree, an ancient image of free nature. 九顶松 (Jiǔ Dǐng Sōng) or "Nine-tip Pine", a 1,400 year old cypress, can be found beside the 四门塔 (Sì Mén Tǎ) or Four Gates Pagoda, the oldest preserved Buddhist pagoda in the country.

木 is a radical in many Chinese words; 林 (forest) 松, (the pine tree), 板(plank), and 棒(stick) are a few examples.

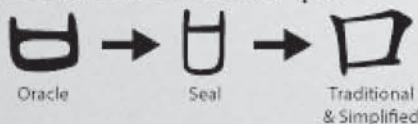
口 Mouth

Pinyin: Kǒu

Written Stroke order:



Evolution of the Script:



Some words that use 口:

品(enjoy), 吃(eat), 喝(drink).



口 Kǒu (mouth)

This character's written form began with the drawing of a child's laughing mouth. Although the happy corners of the mouth have disappeared, 口 still retains the basic shape of the mouth in its current square form.

口 has many derived meanings such as "opening", "mouth of a river" or "door". It also forms the radical component of many Chinese characters such as 名 (name), 吃 (eat), and 号(number).

In Chinese culture, when we ask the question "How many people are in your family?", we say: "How many 'mouths' (口) are in your family?". And we reply with "We have x-numbers of 'mouths'". "Population" is translated to "Human Mouths" = "人 口". There are 1.3 billion people in China, or 1.3 billion mouths (口) to feed in China.

人 Man, Mankind, Person

Pinyin: Rén

Derived radical: 亻

Stroke order:

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 人:

仁 (benevolence)

什 (what)

化 (transform)

人 Rén (person)

The Oracle form of 人 was a depiction of a standing person. This pictograph is one of the earliest representations of a human being in Chinese art, and is almost as simple as the character used today. 人 still retains a strong resemblance to a person, although the character has evolved from resembling a standing person to a walking person.

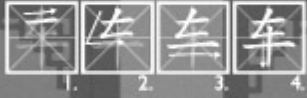
One interpretation of 人 is based on its stroke order: Piě, 撇 (downward left stroke) and Nà, 捺 (downward right stroke). Some believe that the way Piě (撇), and Nà (捺) lean against each other signifies how humans should support and help one another.

人 is a special character, when 人 is used as a radical on the left-side of a character, it is written "亻". For example, 什 (what), 仁 (benevolence), and 化 (transform). The radical form is written this way so it can better fit in a block with other components. You may notice the resemblance between "亻" and the Oracle form of 人.

车 Chariot, Cart

Pinyin: Chē

Stroke order:



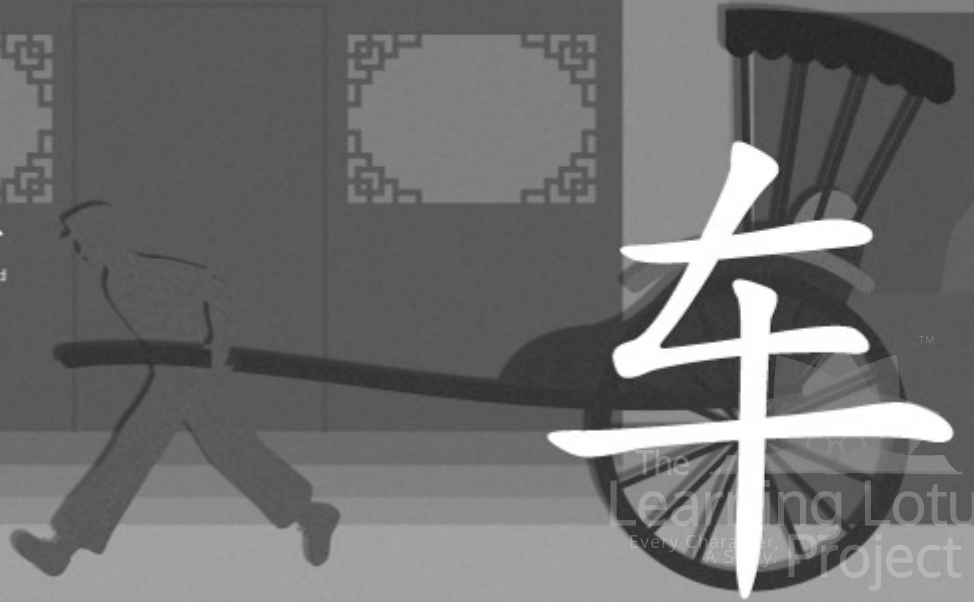
Evolution of the script:



Words that use 车:

转 (turn), 软 (soft)

晕 (confused), 军 (military)



车 Chē (Cart Chariot)

The character for 车 is found often on oracle bones. Its earliest Oracle forms depicted a two-wheeled cart, sometimes with an attached yolk.

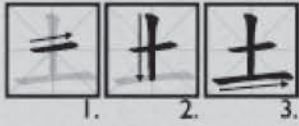
The earliest known types of 车 in china were the hunting and war chariots used by the country's ancient rulers. In these times, hunting and war were integral aspects of people's lives, and chariots offered an advantage in mobility for those who possessed them.

车 has derived to mean "car" even though the original creators of this word would have had no concept of modern cars. Many characters use this radical as a component, some on the left: 转 (turn), 轻 (light), 软 (soft), some on the bottom: 晕 (dizzy), 军 (army), 辈 (generation). It is also used in compound words that refer to a wheeled device such as 马车 mǎchē (carriage), 车子 chēzi (car), 火车 huǒchē (train) and 自行车 zìxíngchē (bicycle).

土 Soil, Earth

Pinyin: Tǔ

Stroke order:

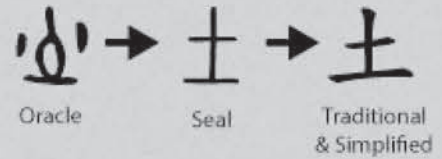


Some words that use 土:

场 (field), 坏 (bad)

坚 (firm), 尘 (dust)

Evolution of the script:



土 Tǔ (soil, earth)

The Oracle script for 土 depicts a plant sprouting up through the earth. The current form of 土 still resembles this with the long horizontal lines for earth, and the vertical line depicting the seedling.

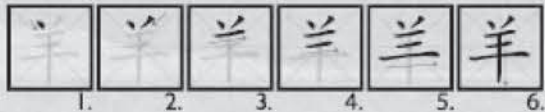
In Chinese culture, 五行 (wǔ xíng), The Five Phases, are used to explain a wide variety of phenomena and is primarily concerned with process and change. 土 is one of the five phases interacting with 木 mù (Wood), 火 huǒ (Fire), 金 jīn (Metal), and 水 shuǐ (Water). Five planets are associated with the phases and named after them: Jupiter 木星 mùxīng is 木 (Wood), Mars 火星 huǒxīng is 火 (Fire), Saturn 土星 tǔxīng is 土 (Earth), Venus 金星 jīnxīng is 金 (Metal), and Mercury 水星 shuǐxīng is 水 (Water). The five phases describe two cycles of balance, the generative cycle and the destructive cycle.

土 means "earth", "dust", "soil", and has some derived meanings such as "territory" and "local area". The "Earth" radical, 土, is a common component in Chinese characters: 场 (field), 坏 (bad), 坚 (firm), 尘 (dust).

羊 Sheep

Pinyin: Yáng

Stroke Order:



Some words that use 羊:

羚(antelope)

羴(velvet)

美(pretty)

Evolution of the Script:



羊 Yáng (sheep)

The Oracle script for 羊 closely resembles the oldest known picture of a sheep found on a fragment of pottery roughly six thousand years old. The horns are broad and strong and the eyes stare with rigidity. Although, with time many of the features have been simplified to basic lines and shapes, the current character 羊 still resembles a simple picture of a sheep.

The largest city and capital of Guangdong province, Guangzhou is also nicknamed the "Five Sheep City". According to legend, long ago, the people who lived along the Pearl River (珠江: Zhū Jiāng) ate only fish, until one day five gods came to earth riding five differently colored sheep, each with an ear of rice in its mouth. The gods taught the people how to plant the rice and blessed the city against famine. The gods flew back to the sky, leaving the 5 sheep behind where they transformed into stones. The "Five Sheep Sculpture" in Yuexiu Park is one of the most famous landmarks in Guangzhou.

羊 also means "goat" and is a popular radical used in many Chinese words such as: 翔 (fly), 羚 (antelope), 美 (beautiful), 养 (support). The goat is also the 8th sign of the Chinese Zodiac. Those born under the 羊 sign are said to be elegant, artistic and charming.

牛 Ox

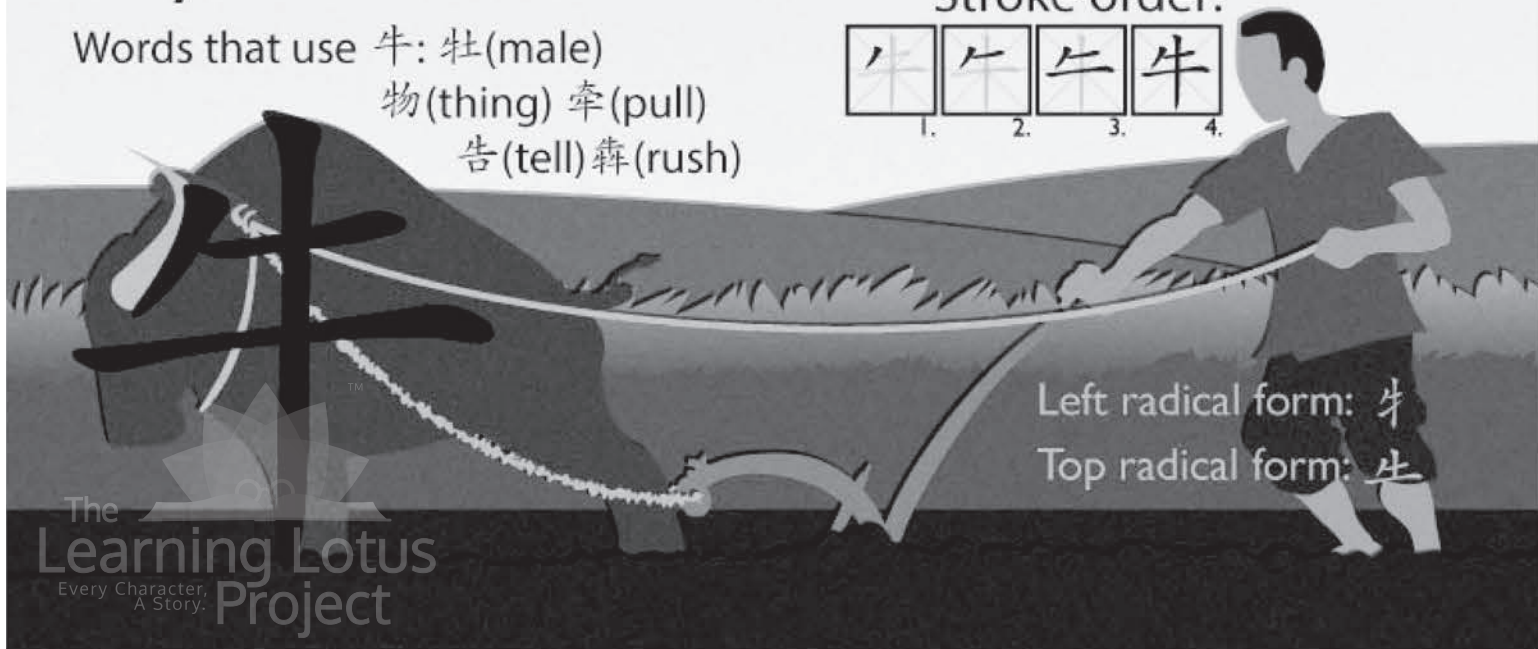
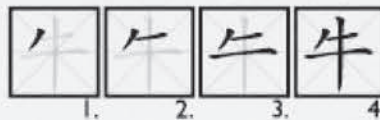
Pinyin: Niú

Words that use 牛: 牡(male)
物(thing) 牵(pull)
告(tell) 犇(rush)

Evolution of the script:

Oracle → Seal → Traditional & Simplified

Stroke order:



Left radical form: 牜
Top radical form: 生

牛 Niú (ox)

The Oracle script for 牛 clearly portrays an ox and is another great example of a pictograph. This character's written form has not changed drastically over the years with the similarities to an ox still visible in its current form: 牛.

Since ancient times, most heavy agricultural labor has been performed by a type of oxen called 水牛 (Shuǐniú), water oxen. Even today, it is not uncommon for farmers in rural regions to use oxen for their strength and power because the oxen's power is equivalent to the power of a small tractors. In China, the 牛 is regarded as a symbol of spiritual strength.

牛 is the 2nd of the 12 signs in the Chinese Zodiac. People born under the 牛 sign are believed to be persistent, hardworking and idealistic.

牛 is a popular radical used in such Chinese characters as: 物 (matter), 牧 (pasture), 牟 (seek), 牵 (pull) 告 (tell), and 犇 (rush).

米 Rice

Pinyin: Mǐ

Evolution of the script:

Oracle → Seal → Traditional & Simplified

Stroke order:



Words that use 米:

料 (material), 粒 (grain),
糕 (cake), 粟 (millet), 粲 (splendid)

米 Mǐ (rice)

In the Oracle bone script, grains of rice (the three dots on the top and bottom) are being separated (the horizontal line) from the chaff by threshing. Though it has been simplified, you can still see the similarity between 米 and its Oracle form.

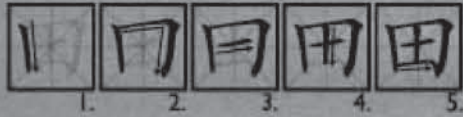
The oldest evidence of rice consumption was found at Yuchanyan Cave in Hunan province and date roughly between 12,000 and 16,000 years old. It is one of the oldest food crops and half of the population of the world eats rice as a major part of their diet. In China, if someone is 88 years old they are said to be in their "米寿" (Mǐshòu) or "Rice Year" because the character 米 looks like a compound ideogram of the characters for 88 (八十八), where the "十" (ten) is sandwiched between the two "八" (eights).

米 is also the phonetically derived word for measurement "meter" because the "me" in meter and 米 (Mǐ) share a similar pronunciation. 米 can be found as a radical in many words including: 料 (material), 粒 (granule), and 糕 (cake).

田 Field

Pinyin: Tián

Stroke Order:



Evolution of the Script:



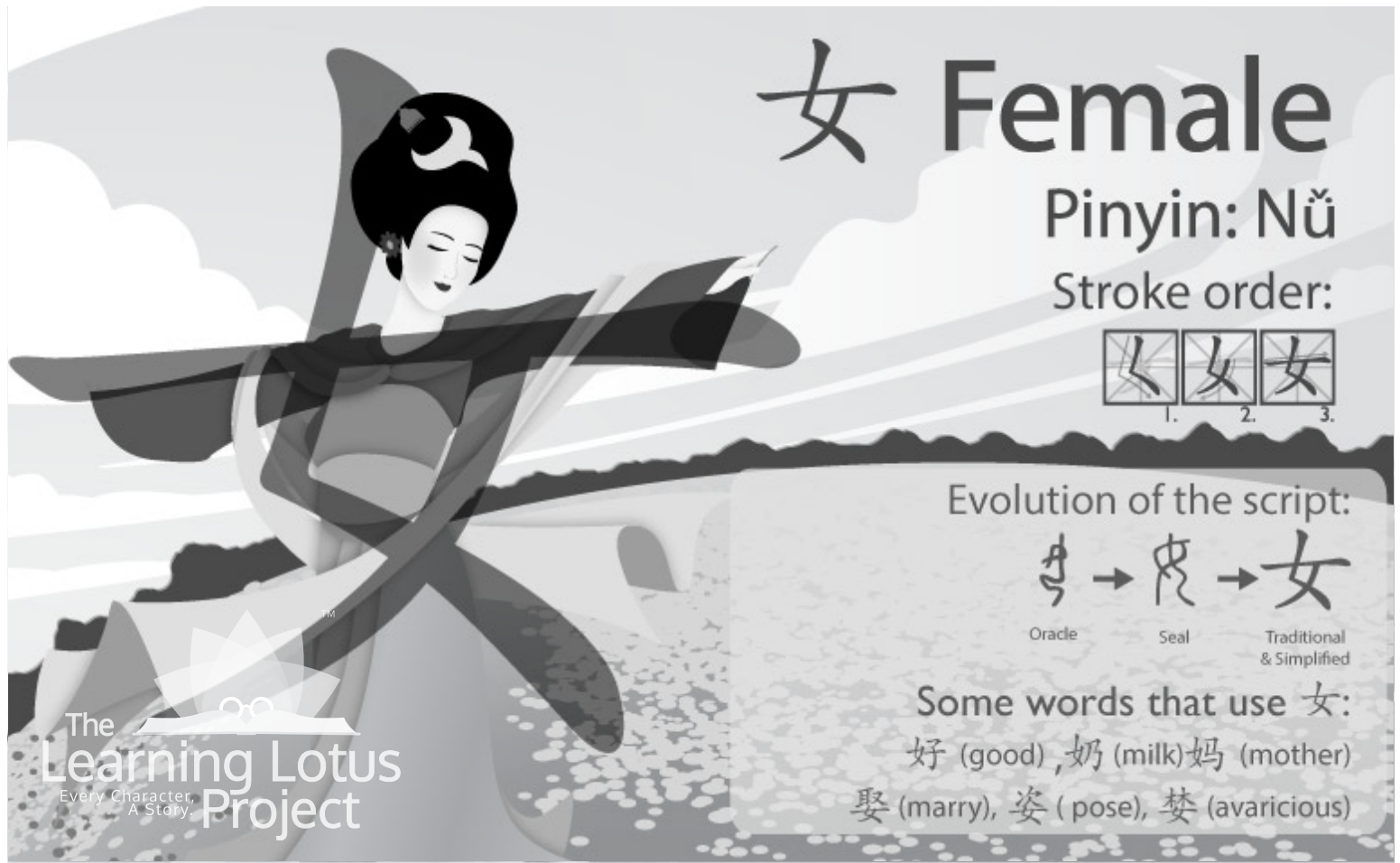
Words that use 田: 留 (stay), 略 (slightly, a little), 畜 (livestock), 男 (male).

田 Tián (field)

Ancient Chinese fields and farms were organized into grids, framed by small dirt paths. These gridded fields were the inspiration for forming the character 田.

In the character 田, the large outer square represents a road or boundary of the pasture, and defines the field's outer-limits. The crossed lines in the center represent smaller paths within the field known as 町 (Tīng). Because of its intrinsically organized nature, 田 carries the extended meaning "neat".

田 is used as a radical in many Chinese words, such as: 畴 (domain), 留 (stay), 畜 (livestock), and 男 (male).



女 Nǚ (female)

The Oracle script for 女 depicts a woman kneeling with her arms crossed in front of her. The character is a stark reminder of the submissive and deferring role that women had in early China.

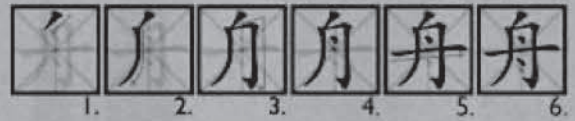
Women's rights became an important priority after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The 新婚姻法 (Xīn Hūnyīn Fǎ) or The New Marriage Law of 1950 put in place many social reforms that made women and men equal before the law in both society and at home and, among other rights, it gave women the right to retain their family name after marriage.

As a word 女 can refer to an unmarried woman or to the female gender in general. It is also used as a radical in many words such as : 好 (good) , 妈 (mother), 奶 (milk), 娶 (marry), and 姿 (pose).

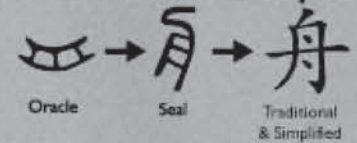
舟 Boat

Pinyin: Zhōu

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 舟: 船 (ship), 舰 (warship), 艇 (craft), 盘 (plate).

舟 Zhōu (boat)

The shape of the Oracle script for 舟 was taken from the curved wooden boats used by Chinese people at the time. The changes for 舟 from its ancient Oracle script to its current form have been relatively minor.

The old Chinese saying “水可载舟, 亦可覆舟” (shuǐ kě zài zhōu, yì kě fù zhōu) translates to “Water can carry the boat, it can also sink the boat”. This quote is attributed to the Tang Dynasty emperor, Li Shimin and describes the interwoven relationship between people (水 Shuǐ | water) and government (舟 Zhōu | boat).

China has a long and extensive Naval history. Chinese ships were believed to have developed and incorporated advanced ship designs such as bulkheads and cross-beam supports well before other Navies. In the early 15th century, China was the leading Naval power in the Pacific Ocean.

舟 is word and a radical used in about forty Chinese words. Most of them use 舟 on the left such as: 船 (ship), 舰 (warship), and 艇 (craft); while, a few use 舟 on the top: 盘 (plate).



目 Mù (eye)

Along with 子 Zǐ, 目 is another one of the earliest characters created in Chinese. The Oracle script clearly depicts the distinctive shape of a human eye. During the standardization of Chinese scripts in the third century B.C., this character became vertical with straitened lines. Knowing how the script evolved, the similarities between its Oracle and modern forms can be easily observed.

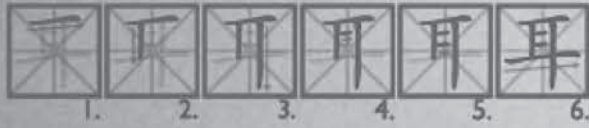
“目不识丁” (mù bù shí dīng) is an idiom in Chinese referring to illiteracy. 丁 (dīng) is one of the simplest single characters to recognize in Chinese and if an individual can not read this simple character, then he/she is considered completely illiterate.

目 is also a radical and is used in many Chinese words such as: 眼睛 (eye), 盯 (stare), 督 (supervise), 睹 (observe), and 看 (to look after).

耳 Ear

Pinyin: Ěr

Stroke Order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use :

取 (take), 耻 (shame), 职 (office)
聋 (deaf), 耸 (towering).

耳 Ěr (ear)

There were several different, and fairly distinctive Oracle and Bronze forms of this character, each a simple drawing of a human ear. 耳 was given an official Seal form under the rule of the first emperor of the Qin dynasty.

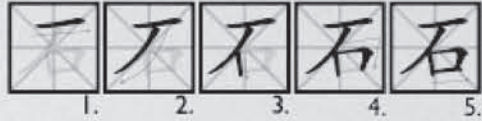
“目不能两视而明，耳不能两听而聪” (“mù bùnéng liǎng shì ér míng, ěr bùnéng liǎng tīng ér cōng”) is a famous quote from the Confucian philosopher Xun Zi (荀子) which translates to "You can't see clearly if you use two eyes to watch two things, you can't hear clearly if you use two ears to hear two things." He uses this idiom to explain the importance of focus and concentration to achieve success and mastery.

耳 is also a radical used in many Chinese words such as: 取 (take), 聋 (deaf), and 耸 (towering).

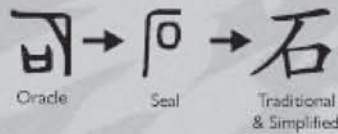
石 Stone

Pinyin: Shí

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use : 硬 (hard),
碗 (bowl), 砖 (brick), 岩 (crag),
碧 (blue), 磨 (mill).



石 Shí (stone)

In earlier forms of 石, the upper strokes were written exactly like the character for cliff: 厂 (Chǎng). Under the cliff there is a boulder represented by a square. In its current form, the top stroke extends further to the left but it still retains the visual elements of a boulder under a cliff.

The original title of the famous Classical Chinese novel Dream of the Red Chamber, 红楼梦 (Hónglóumèng), was The Story of the Rock, 石头记 (Shítou jì). It is a masterpiece of Chinese literature, with a large cast of characters, and is praised for its detailed and accurate depiction of the lives of the aristocracy during the 18th Century Qing Dynasty. This novel is one of China's Four Great Classical Novels, 四大名著 (Sìdà míngzhù) and Redology, 红学 (hóng xué), is the field of study exclusively dedicated to this novel.

石 is also a radical in such words as: 硬 (hard), 碗 (bowl), 砖 (brick), 岩 (crag), 碧 (blue), and 磨 (mill).



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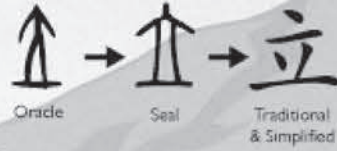
立 Stand

Pinyin: Lì

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Words that use 立: 亲 (close), 产 (property), 章 (chapter), 站 (station), 竦 (reverence)

立 Lì (stand)

The shape of a person standing upright with his/her legs firmly on the ground is depicted in the Oracle script for 立. Even in its current form, the head, shoulders and ground are still apparent and the character displays a very upright and rigid quality.

The original meaning for 立 was to "Stand Up", and today it can mean to "Stand" as well as to "Setup" or "Establish." The idiom 立身处世 (Lì shēn chǔ shì), refers to someone who is active in society. It implies that the only way to build your status within society is to do things for the community, to 立 (lift up) yourself (and others) with your actions.

立 is also used as a radical in many words: 亲 (close), 产 (property), 章 (chapter), 站 (station), and 竦 (reverence).

禾 Grain, Cereal

Pinyin: Hé

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 禾:

利 (profit), 秋 (fall), 和 (and), 秀 (elegant)



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禾 Hé (grain)

The Oracle form of 禾 has a strong resemblance to the Oracle form of 木, "Tree". Both characters are pictographs that depict plants with roots and stems, however the Oracle for 禾 shows a ripe ear of grain on top. In the modern form for 禾, the fruit of the grain became a single stroke on top.

The idiom “风禾尽起” (Fēng hé jìn qǐ) comes from a story about 周公 (Zhōu Gōng). After the death of King Wu of Zhou, the first ruler of the Zhou Dynasty, the deceased King's brother Zhou Gong helped his son, King Cheng Zhou, rule the country. But, the young King Cheng Zhou did not trust Zhou Gong, and didn't listen to his advice. The country started to decline and heavy winds blew the crops down. When the young King Cheng Zhou had a change of heart and took the advice of Zhou Gong, the country found peace and prosperity and a strong wind restored the crops. The moral of the story is: If you do the right thing even the heavens will move for you.

禾 is also used as a radical in many words, such as: 利 (profit), 和 (and), 秋 (fall), and 秀 (elegant).

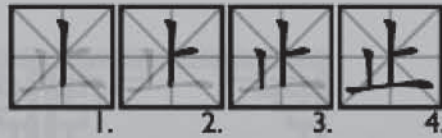


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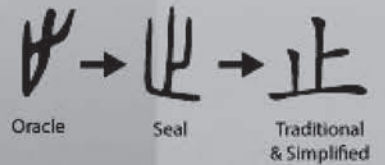
止 Stop

Pinyin: Zhǐ

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 止:

步 (to walk), 武 (fight), 此 (this)

止 Zhǐ (stop)

In the past, 止 meant "Foot". This meaning is illustrated in the Oracle form of this character, which is a pictograph of a footprint with splayed toes. Today "止" is used primarily for "Stop".

望梅止渴 (wàng méi zhǐ kě) is an idiom about fantasies. It translates to: "Wishing for a plum to stop (止) thirst." The idiom references a story about the famous general Cao Cao. On a Summer day, as he was leading a campaign his soldiers became very thirsty, slowing their pace to a crawl. Commander Cao Cao galloped on his horse to the front and pointed with his whip, saying "There is a plum forest ahead, the plums are ripe, delicious and thirst quenching." As his men thought of the plums they began to salivate which satisfied their thirst and improved their morale until they found water. The idiom tells us that fantasizing about something doesn't make it happen but it can be comforting.

When 止 is used as a radical, it can carry the meaning of "Stop" or it can refer to its original meaning "Foot": 步 (to step), and 此 (this).

鸟 Bird

Pinyin: Niǎo

Stroke Order:



Evolution of the script:



Some words that use 鸟: 鸡 (chicken), 鸭 (duck),
鸣 (sound), 鹰 (eagle)

鸟 Niǎo (bird)

鸟 is a character that illustrates the richness of the pictographic writing system. There were varying forms of this character on both oracle bone and bronze vessels depicting different birds and their actions.

“乌鸦反哺” (wūyā fǎnbǔ) translates to: "The crow returns to feed its parents." This idiom is a story about loyalty to your family. It references the characteristics of how crows do not chase their young away from the nest. Instead, young crows will stay with the parents and even help feed incubating females, nestlings and fledglings. “乌鸦反哺” tells us that filial loyalty and respect for one's parents is an important part of being human, and even some animals can recognize its importance.

鸟 is used as a radical in many Chinese words, especially those words related to birds. Many words use 鸟 on the right: 鸡 (chicken), 鸭 (duck), 鸣 (sound). Some words use 鸟 on the bottom: 鸯 (mandarin duck), 鹰 (eagle), 莺 (warbler). And a few on the top: 鸬 (mallard).

走 Walk, Go

Pinyin: Zǒu

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:

𠂔 → 𠂔 → 走

Bronze

Seal

Traditional
& Simplified

Words that use 走:

赶 (hurry up), 起 (stand up), 超 (bypass)

走 Zǒu (walk, go)

The earliest known recorded form of 走 is its Bronze script. 走 is an interesting radical because its Seal form was already a compound ideogram. In its Seal form, you can clearly see a person running over the character for foot, 止. This is a clear depiction of the original concept for 走, "to run on foot".

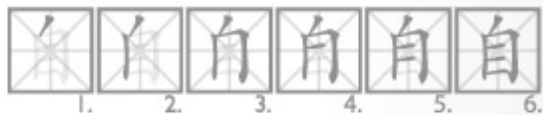
Today, 走 is rarely used to mean "Run", instead it is most often used to mean "To Go" and "Walk".

When 走 is used as a radical, it can be found in over 20 words such as: 赶 (hurry up), 起 (stand up), and 超 (bypass).

自 Self

Pinyin: Zì

Stroke order:



Evolution of the script:



Oracle

Seal

Traditional
& Simplified

Some words that use 自:

息 (interest), 臭 (smelly), 鼻 (nose)



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自 Zì (self)

In its Oracle form 自 is a pictograph of a nose, with the nostrils and bridge clearly depicted. The nose marks the center of the face, and is where we often point when indicating ourselves. Early Chinese people observed this behavior and created the character "自" accordingly.

The famous Chinese philosopher 老子 (Lǎo Zi) once said, "Knowing others is intelligence; knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength; mastering yourself is true power."

自 is used as a radical in words like: 息 (interest), 鼻 (nose).

Name: _____

Date: _____

1) What does this character mean? _____ (1 point)

2) Describe how the shape of the character and the illustration help you remember the character's definition. _____

3) How many strokes are in the character? _____ (1 point)

4) Which tone is the character? (1 point)

- A. 1st
- B. 2nd
- C. 3rd
- D. 4th
- E. neutral

5) How is the character categorized? _____ (1 point)

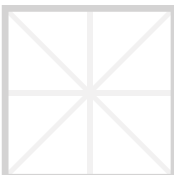
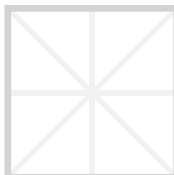
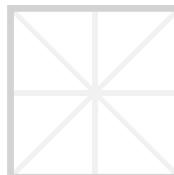
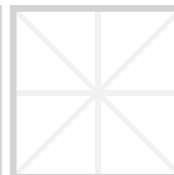




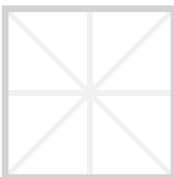
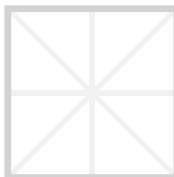
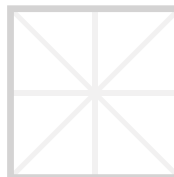
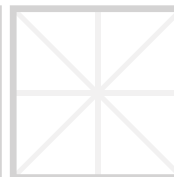
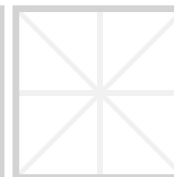

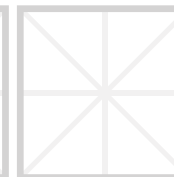

- A. Radical
- B. Word
- C. Radical & Word

Practice Sheet Points

5 times = 1 point

10 times = 2 points

>15 times = 3 points

General Chinese Writing Guidelines

Write from top to bottom, left to right • Horizontal strokes before vertical strokes • Pass-through strokes last
For diagonals: right to left, before left to right • Center strokes first in vertically symmetrical characters
Outside before inside when enclosing • Left vertical stroke first on enclosures • Bottom enclosures last
Dots and minor strokes last



Exercise Expectations

1. Complete character questions
2. Complete writing exercises
 - write each character at least 5 times
3. Pronounce the character as many times as possible
4. Have fun learning!