

Getting Started with Chinese Calligraphy



Materials

Brush



Brush Rest



Ink Stone and Ink



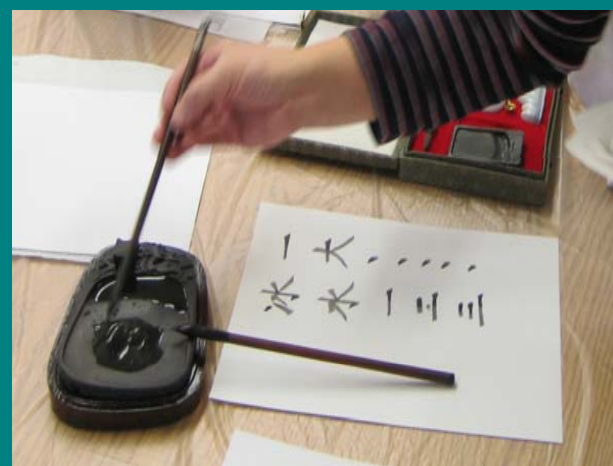
Water to mix with ink

Paper

Ink and Paper

Traditionally, the Chinese add water to an ink stick and use an ink stone to grind the ink that they use for their calligraphy writing.

Since we're going to be using ink mixed with water, we need to use a paper that will absorb most of the water. The Chinese use "Xuan" paper. It is made of green sandalwood straw, bamboo and bark. It is thin, soft and absorbent.



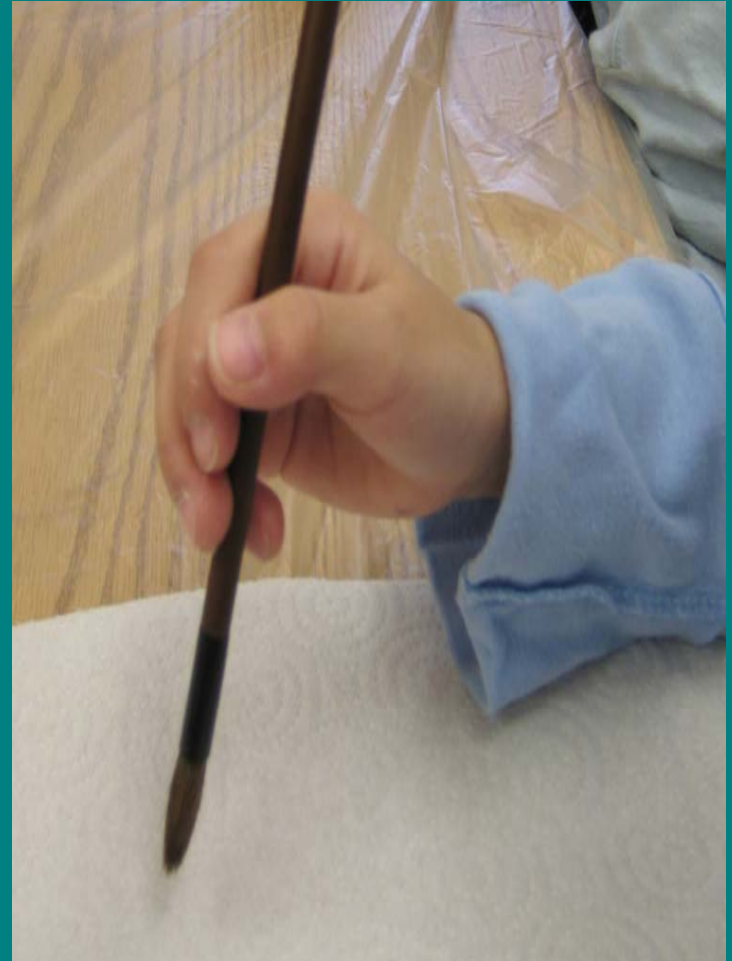
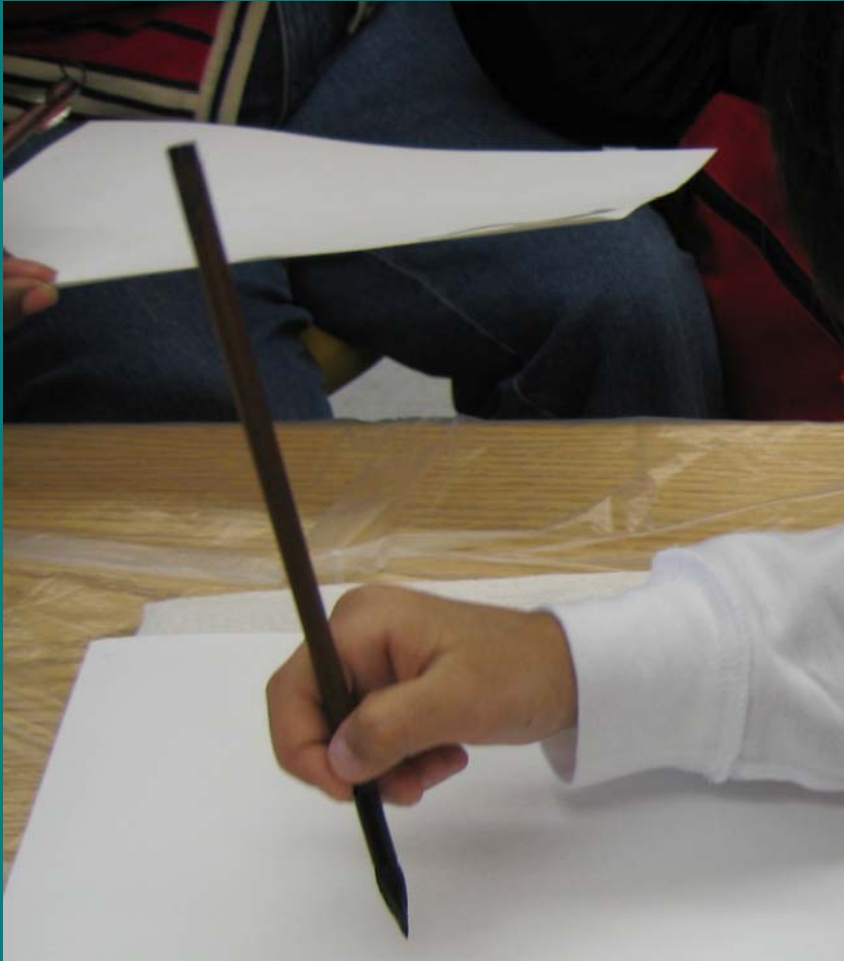
Holding the Brush

The brush should be held in a vertical position with two fingers on one side of the brush handle and the thumb and the other two fingers on the other side of the handle. There should be a gap between the brush and the palm of the hand.

Imagine that you are holding an egg in the palm of your hand. Don't allow the brush to move into that gap where the egg would lie.



How can these holds on the brush be improved?
Can the angle of the brush be improved?



Small Script

For small script, hold the brush just above the brush tip and you may rest your arm or elbow on the table to steady your hand for writing.



Large Script

For large script, hold the brush in the middle of the handle and support your writing with your elbow or try lifting your elbow off the table for more freedom of movement.



Big Writing

- **Big writing, as on a poster or banner, is done standing with no support from the hand or arm against the table. The brush is held about 6 inches from the brush tip.**



Basic Brush Strokes

Horizontal brushstroke

These can be long, short,
pointed, or angled.



Vertical brushstroke

They can be long, short, or
pointed.

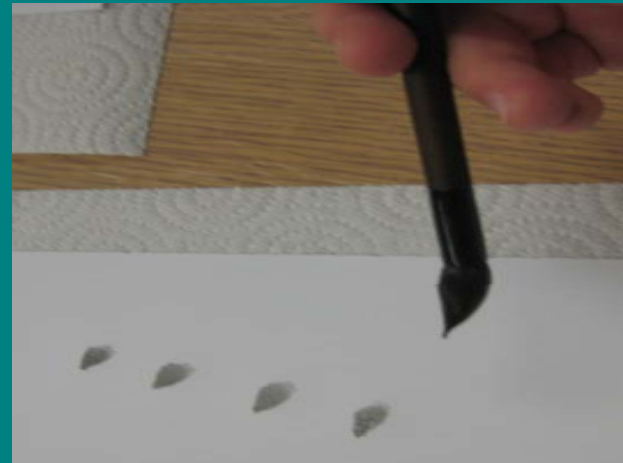


Basic Brush Strokes

Dot

A dot can lean to the right (the most common type of dot) or to the left.

Other dots have a point or are triangular in shape.



Basic Brush Strokes

Hook

A hook is a pointed extension of a horizontal or vertical brushstroke.



Hook



Vertical
Brushstroke

Basic Brush Strokes

Press and lift upward



Press and lift downward



Basic Brush Strokes

Diagonal brushstroke
(sweep) to the left



Diagonal brushstroke
(sweep) to the right



Basic Brush Strokes

This is a good time to practice the basic brush strokes. When you are ready to begin to write Chinese characters, we will learn the Five Golden Rules of calligraphy writing.



What have we learned about Chinese Calligraphy?

1. Hold the brush in a vertical position.
2. The brush is held in different places for small script, large script, or big writing.
3. There are different brush strokes to learn.
4. When it is time to write, there are five rules of how to write a character.

Five Golden Rules of Calligraphy Writing

- Rule #1** Start with the upper part of a word, then move downward.
- Rule #2** Start with the left part of a word, then move to the right.
- Rule #3** Horizontal brushstrokes are made before vertical brushstrokes.
- Rule #4** Diagonal brushstrokes to the left are made before diagonal strokes to the right.
- Rule #5** The box rule: Finish everything inside the box before closing it.

Following the Five Golden Rules

Now we will try to follow the rules for writing Chinese characters and practice the brushstrokes we have learned.

We will write the number characters from 1 to 10.

We will read all of the directions,
then we will start to write.

First – **Log on** to this website:

<http://lost-theory.org/ocrat/chargif/numbers.html>

Follow These Steps

2. Then, **Click** on the Chinese character for 1.
3. **Watch** the red flashing animated line that shows you what stroke comes first to write this character.
4. **Trace** the character in the air with your finger.
5. When you think you can remember how to write 1, **click** the arrow to go “Back” to the web page and select the Chinese character for 2 and click on it.
6. **Watch** each animation from 1 to 10.
7. When you have completed all 10 numbers, you are ready to **write!**

Sources

- Ho, Yat-Ming Cathy. The Chinese Calligraphy Bible. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2007. Contains a large directory of Chinese characters with illustrations showing brush stroke sequence.
- Kryskalla, Steven, comp. "Animated Chinese Characters - Numbers." Ocrat Mirror. 6 Nov. 2006. Lost-Theory.Org. 20 Nov. 2007 <<http://losttheory.org/ocrat/chargif/numbers.html>>. This is the animated calligraphy site for the numbers 1 to 10 as described in slides 17 and 18.
- Peng, Tan Huay. What's in a Chinese Character. New World P, 2005. Contains many characters with stroke sequence and explanations of the evolution of characters from the past to the present.
- White, Caryn M. "Calligraphy Practice: Numbers 1-10." Asia for Educators. Columbia University. 20 Nov. 2007 <<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/language/Numbers1-10.htm>>. Practice worksheets for the numbers 1-10 can be found here.
- White, Caryn M. "Chinese Calligraphy." Asia for Educators. Columbia University. 20 Nov. 2007 <<http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/china/language/callig.htm>>. Good background information for teachers on the history of calligraphy and classroom suggestions for success in teaching calligraphy.
- Yue, Rebecca. Chinese Calligraphy Made Easy: a Structured Course in Creating Beautiful Brush Lettering. New York: Watson-Guption Publications, 2005. "The Five Golden Rules" in slide 15 were found here as were the descriptions of how to hold a brush in slides 4, 5 and 6.