



Week 1

GETTING STARTED
WITH WRITING

Week 2

HEARING AND
SPEAKING

Week 3

EAR TRAINING AND
MORE WRITING

Week 4

SETTING A LEARNING
GOAL

30-DAY JUMPSTART



15 MINUTES A DAY TO REV UP YOUR LEARNING

The following study guide will take you about 15 minutes each day to complete.

The exercises are designed to accompany our free WCC Dictionary app which is available for Android and iOS, but they can also be used with any Chinese learning software including WCC Dictionary's free online version at WrittenChinese.com which doesn't require an app.

You could also use a paper dictionary, but we recommend a digital dictionary that has audio files and writing guides such as WCC Dictionary.

GET
WCC DICTIONARY
FREE AT
WrittenChinese.com



TOOLS

Gather up the following tools to make sure that you have everything you need when it's time to study. Find yourself a pleasant spot to study so that you start your study sessions off on the right foot.

WEEK 1



Chinese dictionary

(Get a free one at [WrittenChinese.com](https://www.WrittenChinese.com))



Notebook or Chinese writing paper

(Chinese writing paper available on [WrittenChinese.com](https://www.WrittenChinese.com))

Week 2



Mandarin pronunciation audio files

(already built into the WCC Dictionary app)



Recording device

(most smartphones have them built-in)



Space

(where you don't feel shy speaking out loud)

Week 3



Speech-to-text software

(such as Siri or Google Voice)

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION

In Chinese writing, each time you lift your pen from the paper the line you've drawn is called a stroke.

For example, when you write a standard capital letter "A" in English you would count 3 strokes: one line going from top to left, one going top to right, and finally one through the middle.

The first step is to get familiar with the strokes and to learn the proper stroke order. You absolutely must write the characters in the correct stroke order or you will have problems later on.

If have a real, live Chinese teacher, then let them help get you started with the basics.

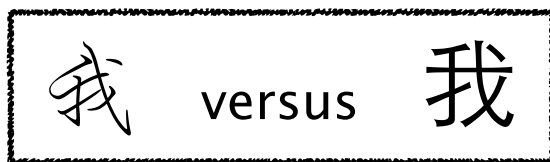
Not all of us have the chance to have a Chinese teacher, but not to worry!

Stroke animations are included in the WCC Dictionary app so that you can watch how characters are properly written. If you aren't using the app, you can see the animations online at WrittenChinese.com. Click the LEARN MORE when you search any word in the dictionary to see the stroke animations.

Pay close attention to whether the stroke is written from left to right, or right to left and no going rogue! The shortcuts you make now will backfire later, so do it carefully and do it right!

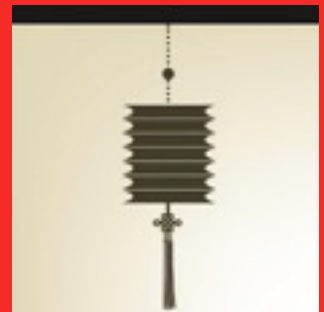
You may notice that some Chinese computer fonts are simpler block letters while others are written with many swoops like in cursive or in Chinese calligraphy.

You don't need to pay close attention to the way that Chinese looks in its calligraphy form. When you see little swooping lines running this way and that, refer to the simpler block letters. If they also make the line swoop, then you know it's necessary to have them.



You'll get the hang of it quickly as you practice.

This Week:
Let's Write Some
Chinese



Tip: Don't throw out your old Chinese writing notebooks.

They are a great way to remind yourself of how far you've come!

WEEK 1 DAILY CHECKLIST

Step 1

Open the WCC Dictionary app and tap the flashcard icon.



Tap HSK VOCABULARY and then HSK 1. Tap on the first new character.

If you aren't using the app, get the HSK 1 vocabulary PDF at [WrittenChinese.com](https://www.WrittenChinese.com).

Step 2

Tap SEE RADICALS below the word details in the app, or search the pinyin of the word on our online dictionary and click the LEARN MORE button next to the character.

Both methods allow you to see the radicals. Think of a creative way that the pieces go together to form the meaning.

Example: “爱” (ai4) means “love” and includes the radicals: claw, cover, left, and right hand. You might imagine a lioness COVERing her cubs with her RIGHT HAND and CLAWing at a predator with her LEFT.

Step 3

Tap WRITING at the bottom of the app to see a stroke animation for the character. Watch closely which strokes are written first and in which direction they move.

Tap the screen to watch the animation again.

Step 4

Write the character once using a pen and paper. Now carefully study the proportions of your character versus the stroke animation. How far away is one stroke from another? Where does one line finish in relation to another line?

This is where Chinese writing paper comes in handy since it gives you a perfect square with grid lines for each character.

Step 5

Write the character again 9 times. Each time you write it, write the Pinyin and tone mark near the character and think about the meaning of the word.

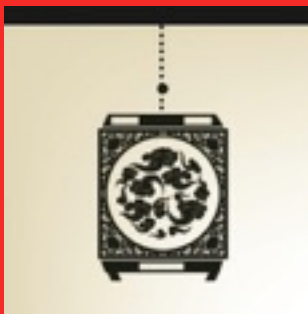
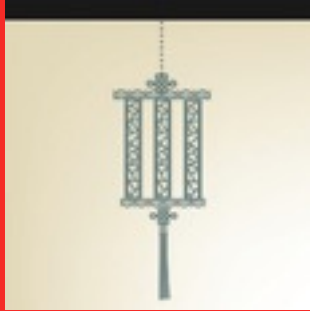
Step 6

Review your 10 written characters. Which one did you write the best compared with the stroke animation? Circle that one for your reference later.

Step 7

Repeat steps 2–6 for the next 6 characters in the HSK 1 flashcard set.

This Week: Let's Speak Some Chinese



Tip: Learning to train your ear will not only help you speak properly, but it will help you to understand Chinese speakers faster.

WEEK 2 INTRODUCTION

Oh dear...this seems to be the most disliked part of studying Chinese: repeating words out loud. It can sometimes be uncomfortable, strange or even a bit embarrassing.

Sorry to break it to you, but it's also one of the most critical components of learning the language so let's conquer it and get it out of the way.

To most of us, Chinese sounds quite foreign and nasally. In fact at first it can be quite difficult to distinguish one word from another.

You might already know that Chinese is a tonal language, meaning that when you change the tone, it changes the meaning completely.

Congratulations to those of you who have musical hearing! You're already one step ahead because you know how to listen for tonal changes. For those of you that can't carry a tune, this will probably be your biggest frustration when learning Chinese, but have no fear, you CAN do it!

Some people might tell you that you don't need to learn the tones. I must admit that it is tempting to listen to these people. You might think, here's my escape! I don't really need to bother with tones! Sorry, but none of the people who believe that can speak properly, **guaranteed**.

You can roll your eyes if you want, but if you don't learn how to use tones from the start, you'll end up repeating yourself over and over again while Chinese people attempt to correct every word you say. Or worse, they won't understand you at all.

Remember, saying a Chinese word in two different tones is like saying two different words in English such as "dead" and "bed": it completely changes the meaning. Thus, speaking tones correctly is critical to learning to speak Chinese well. Really all it takes is careful listening.

WEEK 2 DAILY CHECKLIST

Step 1

Open the WCC Dictionary app to the dashboard. If you don't see it, tap MENU and then DASHBOARD.

If you aren't using the app, Login to your free online account at WrittenChinese.com.

Step 2

Look at the character of the day and its definition. Then tap LEARN MORE to see more details about this character.

Step 3

Tap the audio button to the upper left of the character to hear its pronunciation.



Listen to it 3 times, paying close attention to every part of the pronunciation.

How does the word start? What does the vowel sound like? Can you recognize which tone it is without looking at the pinyin? How does the ending of the word sound?

Step 4

Repeat the word 3 times out loud and then listen again to the audio file.

The key to learning a new language is mirroring. You want to imitate exactly how the speaker is saying the word.

Don't be shy, not being afraid to make mistakes is key to nailing the pronunciation!

Step 5

Record yourself saying the word 3 times. Listen again to the audio file before playing your own recording back.

Have you ever met someone who thinks they are an amazing singer but really aren't that good? It's the same principle: How you think or imagine yourself saying the word isn't necessarily how it actually sounds.

Invest time listening to yourself carefully.

Tip: Saying the character louder will make it easier for you to hear and correct pronunciation mistakes.

Step 6

Go to the HSK 1 vocabulary list. Repeat steps 3–5 with 4 more characters from this list. Start from the top and work your way down the list.

As you practice the words, visualize their meaning. Don't think of the English translation. Instead, imagine the actual object or action associated with the word.

This will help you to better remember its meaning.

Step 7

Write each of the words you've studied today 5 times with a pen and paper.

WEEK 3 INTRODUCTION

You survived week 2, nice work! Never give up on trying to perfect your pronunciation, even if it puts you out of your comfort zone at times.

If you have native Chinese-speaking friends around, bug them into showing you which words you're not saying well. Watch their mouths as they speak and imitate the shapes they make when you speak.

If you don't have any native speakers around you, try getting your hands on some Chinese movies or TV shows. Netflix definitely has some and if you're looking for recommendations, check out the TV Shows section of WrittenChinese.com.

Now that you have a general concept for what Chinese sounds like, it's time to test what you've learned as well as continue writing.

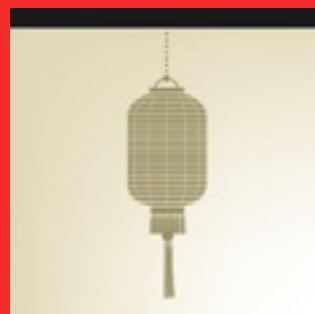
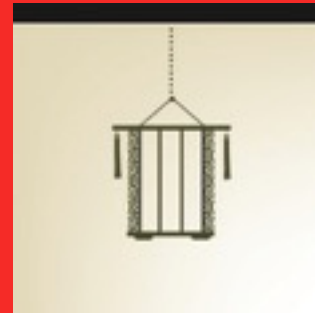
You can use a voice-to-text service such as Siri or Google Voice to check if you're saying the Chinese correctly. If the service can understand your Chinese, then you're on the right track!

Keep in mind that many Chinese words have the same pronunciation. If you say a 2-character word (called a Bigram) or a phrase, it is more likely the voice-to-text service will be able to more accurately produce the Chinese characters that you were trying to say.

If you are saying one character at a time, the voice-to-text service might give you a different character from the one you were aiming for. Check to see if that character has the same pinyin AND tone as the one you were trying to say.

You're pronouncing the word correctly if you're getting a word with the right pinyin and tone, even if it's a different Chinese character.

This Week: Listen and Write Chinese



Tip: For Siri, switch the keyboard Chinese so that it knows you're trying to speak Chinese.

For Google Voice, it will detect which language you are speaking automatically.

WEEK 3 DAILY CHECKLIST

Step 1

Open your HSK 1 vocabulary list in the WCC Dictionary app.

Remember you can also get HSK 1 vocabulary online at WrittenChinese.com.

Step 2

Start from the last word that you learned and practice writing it 10 times.

Write the pinyin and tone mark of the word each time to reinforce the pronunciation.

Step 3

Do **Step 2** for the next 6 words in the list.

Make sure to think about the meaning of the word as you write it.

Instead of thinking of the English translation, picture the meaning visually.

You can also tap STUDY in the lower right corner of the app to test if you can remember the meanings and/or write the words from memory.

Step 4

On the WCC Dictionary app, tap in the search box to bring up your phone's keyboard.

Note: If you are not using the app, many text editing programs such as Microsoft Word also include voice-to-text transcription technology.

Step 5

Hold down the voice input button and speak the words that you have just written.

iOS users: Remember to switch your keyboard to Chinese.

Step 6

Once you've finished speaking, tap the search button on your keyboard to run a search for those words.

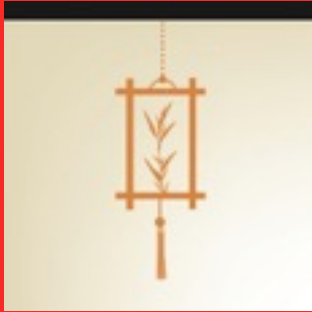
Some of them may not be the correct character, but check to see if the voice recognition got the right pinyin. The tone must also match to get it right!

For those words that you didn't get right, listen to the audio files and try again.

Step 7

Say 10 other Chinese words that you have learned from memory to see if the voice-to-text service gets them right.

This Week: Setting a Learning Goal



Tip: Learning 3-5 words a day may seem like a super easy goal at first, but remember that you must retain all the vocabulary as the days pile up.

We recommend you learn about 20 words per week.

Set a reasonable goal to get it right! Trying to do too much at once is how many students end up failing.

WEEK 4 INTRODUCTION

To say that you “want to speak Chinese” is not a good learning goal because you’ll **never** know every word. Words get borrowed from other languages, new inventions get named, and slang evolves constantly. You must define what you hope to achieve more clearly if you want to succeed.

You might want to decide how many characters you want to learn in a given time frame. As a point of reference, most Chinese high school students can recognize between 4000–6000 characters. Wow...that’s a lot, right? But don’t worry, you can learn FAR less and still be able to communicate well in Chinese and even read.

Here are 2 ideas for goals to keep your learning on track:

Idea 1: Start Studying to Take the HSK

The HSK is a standardized test for Chinese proficiency. It’s divided into 6 levels, and you can find more detailed information about it on WrittenChinese.com.

If this is your goal, start by learning Level 1 vocabulary. The WCC Dictionary app has free vocabulary for all the levels.

Idea 2: Read 75% of Chinese by Learning 521 Characters

You don’t have to learn thousands of characters to be able to read most Chinese text. We calculated which characters are used most often and put them into a flashcard set called MOST COMMON CHINESE CHARACTERS in the flashcard section of the WCC Dictionary app.

After you learn all 521 words, you’ll be able to read over 75% of written Chinese. Not such a daunting task after all!

You can also get the wall poster of these characters from WrittenChinese.com by clicking CHINESE TOOLS->PHYSICAL STUFF.

Finally, set an achievable goal, such as learning 100 words in a month. Then calculate how many words per day you need to learn.

WEEK 4 DAILY CHECKLIST

Step 1

Choose a flashcard set that you want to learn in the WCC Dictionary app and tap STUDY in the lower right corner.

Make sure that the Display Question is marked as Chinese so that you see the Chinese character first and try to guess the English meaning.

If you're not using the app, you can use your own handmade flashcards.

Step 2

Go through the first 20 flashcards, saying the Chinese out loud and thinking the meaning in your head, then flipping over the flashcard to see if you got it right.

Step 3

For words that you have a hard time remembering, draw a picture or write a sentence that will help you remember its meaning, pronunciation and character.

See how other learners are doing this by searching for the word in the online dictionary at WrittenChinese.com and then clicking the LEARN MORE button.

Scroll down to the Comments section of the Learn More page to see what people have said about the character as well as to add your own ideas.

Step 4

Shuffle and switch your flashcard set to the other side so that you see the English meaning first.

Study 20 words while looking at the English first. Write the pinyin and tone mark with a pen and paper, then try writing the Chinese character to the best of your ability.

If you only have a vague idea what the character looks like, just try drawing its general shape.

You might be way off at first, but that's okay. Give yourself some slack, it takes time to learn Chinese!

Step 5

Once you have gone through all 20 flashcards, look back at your written list and try to recall what each character means.

Step 6

Now re-write each word 3 times with its pinyin and tone mark.

Step 7

Circle your best attempt at writing and feel good about all of your progress.

Happy Studying!

Cut out these two calendar templates and write the current month on top and the days in the boxes. Make a checkmark on the calendar when you have completed the weekly steps in order to record your study habits and streaks. Happy studying!

RESOURCES

Search “**WCC Dictionary**” in the iOS App Store or on Google Play to download our free dictionary and learning toolkit.

Check out the free online dictionary at WrittenChinese.com

Get learning tips, flashcards and culture lessons at facebook.com/writtenchinese

Peek at Shenzhen life and get flashcards at instagram.com/writtenchinese

Stay current with Chinese learning tools and news at twitter.com/writtenchinese

Ask questions and listen in about life in China at writtenchinese.com/podcast

Watch Chinese videos and lessons at youtube.com/user/writtenchinese