

# Wordz Lianxi - Learning Basic Chinese Characters

	滑雪板	救护车			飞机
船			汽车		冲浪板
冰刀			滑板		消防车
警车	地铁	卡车		电动车	公共汽车
		独木舟		电梯	
	自行车			摩托车	

Harry A. Layman

## Study Guide for Basic Chinese Characters - 1

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This instruction guide accompanies and supports the Wordz Lianxi – Language Learning System software application for iPad, iPod Touch and iPhone. v1.2c

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### Introduction

This study guide accompanies “Chinese4Beginners” and related applications of the Wordz Lianxi Language Learning System application software. Wordz Lianxi 1 is designed to assist learners of Chinese with recognizing over 286 basic Chinese words comprised of some 340+ unique simplified Chinese characters (Hanzi). This guide includes references to, and information about, nearly 500 Chinese characters used in everyday life that include many simple examples of nouns, adjectives, verbs and other common word types that are organized and presented to maximize learning for students new to the written Chinese language.

Traditional approaches are guided by simple word frequency, random exposure via simple dialogs, or someone’s idea of the most “important” characters. This guide and the Chinese4Beginners software present words in a logical order that help you learn them in several ways: a) by identifying common character components, their meaning, and how words that use them related to each other and the common elements; b) by grouping words in a fashion that emphasizes commonalities; and c) by layering the character exposure so that knowledge “builds” – adding new characters by leveraging information learned about previous characters.

This software and instruction guide is not designed to be a primary source for learning the written Chinese language, but to accompany materials and other forms of instruction in basic Chinese. We use here the “simplified” Chinese character set as used in the Peoples Republic of China and Singapore. (Traditional characters are still widely used in Taiwan and Hong Kong.)

Learning Chinese is difficult for those accustomed to alphabet-based languages for a great variety of reasons<sup>1</sup>. Many experts recommend that learners of Chinese already fluent in another language take a very different, and more efficient, approach to learning Chinese than is used for native speakers that grow up in an environment filled with the sounds, syntax and tones used in everyday Chinese. Foreign learners, as I shall call them, are better served by learning aspects of the language – vocabulary, syntax, sounds, tones, characters and words – in various modes, and not necessarily all things at once.

Most foreign learners of Chinese begin their study by learning the basic sounds and tones of Chinese, and need a few simple words to use for practice. In addition, good practice requires simple sentences, dialogs and descriptions using basic and familiar “words” – and these words are chosen to give the student a starting point in such practice during their early study of the Chinese language.

Many foreign learners focus solely on the spoken language when starting with Chinese; others want to learn both the written and spoken language together. This material is designed for the beginning Chinese learner that would like to begin becoming familiar with Chinese characters for everyday words.

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<sup>1</sup> “Why Chinese is so Damn Hard”, an essay by David Moser dedicated to John DeFrancis to celebrate his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and contributions to the study of Chinese. At <http://goo.gl/mrljvp>

A more comprehensive approach to learning Asian language characters, designed for learners already fluent in another language (such as English, German, French, Portuguese and Spanish), was developed by James W. Heisig in the 1980's (initially for learning Kanji, or Japanese characters) and adopted by Heisig and Timothy W. Richardson for Chinese (both for Traditional and Simplified Hanzi or Chinese characters) in 2007. Others (notably Matthews and Matthews, see the references below) extended and modified the approach to address more aspects of the language (e.g. sounds, tones) but use the same basic “building block” approach for teaching learners how to recognize and learn the basic Chinese character set.

This approach starts with individual strokes and simple characters, adds character components and then adds characters of increasing complexity. Each new character adds to characters already learned in a simple incremental way, by combining existing forms or strokes, or adding the smallest additional element required. By using a combination of “incrementalism”, keywords and mnemonic phrases or short stories, some students have learned large “vocabularies” (in terms of visual character recognition and association with meaning) in much shorter times than conventional approaches to learning characters (e.g. learning characters in order based on frequency and utility). The key is that as a result of this incremental approach, students can see common character elements from the beginning, making adding more complex characters to their “visual vocabulary” easier.

The Basic Chinese Characters 1 product, and this learning guide, is focused on helping learners recognize a specific set of over 286 basic words and associated characters. Tips and ideas to assist with learning each of characters and words that comprise the 16 word sets are included in the information in this Learning Guide. In many cases, these tips include “building block” information following the model used by the Heisig and Richardson approach to character learning to help make the characters easier to learn and remember. This work however is my own, and any errors, omissions or failings in my attempt to emulate even the template of their excellent work should not detract from your motivation to study their excellent system. Unlike this collection of common words, their system builds up so that every character beyond a minimal base set of shapes is built up from primitive components in an orderly, structured way. With Basic Chinese Characters one, we focus generally on high usage words, so many important components are introduced “on the fly” – and reinforced through common occurrence in other elements within the sets of “Wordz”. Further, the brief “twitter sized” *hints* provided in the software point to *cues* in this text, but by themselves are too short to “teach”. Rather, they are designed to trigger memory of what can be learned from this guide.

For more information on learning Chinese, and on our software tools, web-based learning resources and other products, visit us at [www.chinese4beginners.com](http://www.chinese4beginners.com).

You may also order physical copy of this book in rich and vivid color – see our web site for more details.

Thank you for purchasing our software!

Harry Layman

Spring 2011

#### References:

“Remembering the Kanji”, by Dr. James W. Heisig, University of Hawai'i Press, May 2007. Additional works with similar titles going back to his first edition of the basic system for Kanji in the 1987.

“Remembering Simplified Hanzi”, by Dr. James W. Heisig and Dr. Timothy W. Richardson, University of Hawai’i Press, October, 2008.

“Chinese Characters”, Dr. L. Wieger, S.J., Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1965. The first edition 1915; the second edition 1927. Translated from the French by L. Davrout, S.J.

“Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese”, Dr. Bernhard Karlgren, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1974. Originally published in 1923.

“Grammata Serica”, Dr. Bernhard Karlgren, The Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities No. 12, Stockholm, 1940; reprinted by Elanders Boktryckeri A.-B., Gothenburg, 1940.

Additional links and information:

[www.chinese4beginners.com](http://www.chinese4beginners.com)

[www.chinese4children.org](http://www.chinese4children.org)

[www.wordzlianxi.com](http://www.wordzlianxi.com)

[www.wenlin.com](http://www.wenlin.com)

## Notes for this Learning Guide

Character sounds are described using “pinyin” (see [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinyin)). This system uses English letters and numbers – the numbers 1-4 for the four “tones” used in Chinese; sometimes 5 is used for “no tone”. Also note there are many, many characters for most basic sounds – and sometimes dozens. Hence “shi2” may mean “ten”, and “shi4” might be the verb “to be”, but there are dozens of other possibilities at the character level for what these sounds might mean. Also sounds like “che1” and “chi1” (car and eat) might be very close for non-Chinese speaker to distinguish, with the same tone but different final sound, but the specific sounds are based on the rules for pinyin, and the pinyin sounds for letters (I and E in this case) may not always be as closely related to the English sounds for these characters as expected without study of Pinyin as part of your Chinese studies.

One familiar pattern for characters is for them to have two parts, one that contributes the “meaning”, the other which contributes to the “sound”. How they contribute is not always simple, and so one cannot with certainty know either the sound or the meaning of a new character – or even which part might be a clue for

what. An example: 跑 (pao3) means “run”. The left side is a compressed form of 足, which means

foot (sound: zu2); the right side is 包 which means bag or wrap (sound: bao1). The character has the meaning “run” which is derived from the meaning of the left side. And it has a sound derived from the right side. But of course, while foot and run are related, once does not imply the other. Similarly, “pao” sort of “rhymes” with “bao” – but they are different tones. The sounds are “close” – same final sound, similar initial sound. But one does not imply the other. So what we have are “clues”, not deterministic rules. As a result, it is more important for you to develop your own way of remembering what characters mean rather than remember specific, historical reasons for what they are and mean and sound like (which, often, are themselves only guesses). This is because learning to read will require you to recognize characters correctly, and quickly, but not that you “know” their correct histories, derivations or how they have changed since ancient times.

Note also that some characters have multiple pronunciations, and sometimes each variation has its own meaning. These are relatively rare, and while we meet one or two in these lessons, we won’t dwell on this

issue. Example: in lesson 1 we have “bicycle”: 自行车 or zi4xing2che1 for “self – go – vehicle”.

This pronunciation for 行 as xing2, and it is associated with the meaning “go” or “okay”; it is quite common. For example, it is used in “bu4xing2!” for “won’t work!”, “not okay”, “won’t go”, etc. But

equally common is the word for bank: 银行, which is yin2hang2. In this case, 行 when pronounced as “hang2” means “row, column or line”. Luckily these sorts of things are rare (there are only a small number of such characters among the most common 1,500 characters.) Another example in Basic Chinese Characters 1 is 觉 which in sleep (睡觉) is given as Jiao4, but in “think or feel” is (觉得), or Jue2. These dual-pronunciation items are different from characters with a single pronunciation and multiple meanings, as we see with “wait” and “meet” (both 会).

## A Word about Radicals or Components

This text uses the term “radicals”, which are special, common word components in Chinese, and has been used to organize the words in the language for ages. Figuring out which element was the “primary radical” has long been the bane of learners using printed dictionaries; the rapid rise of electronic dictionaries has made radical-based lookup, and to some extent stroke order and proper stroke counting, less essential. It remains quite useful to know and understand how to write characters properly by hand, but much less so in an electronic world.

In this text (and often in the software hints) I sometimes refer to the following radicals by these names:

- 辶 – road or go radical: 这, 连, 远, 进 (this, connect, far and near)  
Connect is in lotus root and dress.
- 艹 – grass, grain or plant radical: 苹, 草莓, 莲藕, 菜, 蓝 and many other plants
- 亻 – person radical (from 人): 停, 体 (stop, body)
- 饣 – food radical (from 食): 饭, 饺, 馄饨 (rice or food, dumpling, wanton)
- 讠 – word or “i” radical: 说, 话, 词, 谁 (speak, talk, words, who)
- 氵 – three dot water: (from 水) 汤, 油 (oil, soup)
- 冫 – two dot water" (from 水) 冷, 冰 (cold, ice)
- 纟 – silk: left side of 红, 给 (red, give)
- 艹 or twisted silk: bottom of 紫, 素 (purple, vegetarian)
- 忄 – heart (from 心): 快, 慢, 怕 (fast, slow, fear)
- 心 – heart (full form, usually on bottom): 葱, 总 (onion, sum or general)
- 竹 – bamboo : on top of 筷, 等, 笑 (chopsticks, wait, laugh )
- 刂 – knife (from 刀): 到 (arrive)
- Triangle (厶) -- note up or down - 云 clouds, 会 meet or be able. (si1 radical).
- 扌 – hand (from 手) -- 打, 热, 找, 扔 (hit or play or use, hot, seek, throw)
- 火 – fire: 炒, 烧, 烟, 烫 (stir fry, roast, smoke, scalding -- on bottom!)
- 火 dots: 点, 热, 黑, 蕉, (dots or a little, hot, black or dark, banana)
- 目 – eye component. Sideways this is NET. 田 – field.
- 钅 – metal or gold (from 金 gold) . 夕 – evening. 阝 – hill, mound or city.



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## 1. Set 1 – “On the Go”

This first word set (or “Wordz”) presents various means of transportation. Many are vehicles, so one expects the name to end in the character “车” or Che1, which is the word for vehicle, and often used as American English speakers might use “car”. “Qi4 che1” is more like “automobile”, or literally “gas (powered) car”, so sometimes this reference is used to be more explicit. “Ka3Che1” is truck, and the first character 卡 has the “ka3” sound and is also used in other words where the Chinese word uses the ka3 sound to connote “card” – credit cards and hotel room key cards are good examples. Jing3che1 for police car also follows this pattern, and illustrates another Chinese word forming pattern: The Jing3 in Jing3che1 comes from Jing in Jing3Cha2 (警察) for police – but as often the case, the first character of the word for police is combined with the vehicle word to create the word for police vehicle. This will be a familiar pattern – for example, the word or phrase for “European-American” is made from just the first characters of the word for “Europe” and “America” – so 欧洲 (ou1zhou1) + 美国 (mei3guo2) = 欧美 (ou1mei3).

Other words in this set that end in Che1 车 include mo2tuo1che1, created as a transliteration of motor plus the character for vehicle. The “Mo2” character is the word used for “message” – which has a lean-to shelter above it, two little trees (sound for these as characters by themselves is mu3) under the shelter but above the character for “hand”). These three components - 广, 木 (used twice) and 手, all combine to form 摩. A quick glance might suggest that the two 木 together almost form an “M” – and can remind the reader of the “mo” sound, giving “mo”-che1 or motor-something-car (three characters means three symbols) – hence this character must be the word for motorbike or motorcycle (mo2tuo1che1).

A more sensible approach to learning Chinese characters might first teach the three components – and some cases, their components first, building up to complex characters like the mo2 (摩) – which is exactly what the Heisig-Richardson and Matthews-Matthews approaches do in the books referenced in the introduction.

Some additional observations about the words in this set:

- Che1 (车), the word for vehicle, is commonly used in words related to cars – park can be “stop car” (停车 – set 16) and “taxi” can be (出租车) for example. These three characters mean “go out”, “rent” and “vehicle” – a “go-rent-car”. Zu1 (租) for rent or lease, is a good character to know (see ‘additional words’ in chapter 17).
- Dian4 (电) for “electric” or electronic is a frequent character in many modern words.

- Ka3 (卡) -- for it's sound (as in Card); Fei1 (飞) for fly; Mu4 (木) for wood or tree, and dao1 (刀) for knife are important components or characters we will see again in later lessons.

Additional mnemonics for remembering other “on the go” characters are presented below, followed by the pictures for the set:

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
自行车	Zi4xing2che1	Self Action Vehicle	Bicycle	Action is “xing2dong4” using 行动 – but 行 has multiple meanings and pronunciations. The zi4 (自) character for self can be visualized as a person pointing to their own forehead between the eyes (mu4 or 目) is the character and word that means “eye” – see lesson 13).
飞机	Fei1ji1	Flying Machine	Airplane	Each char in this case <b>can</b> be used by itself for the meanings indicated: fei1 (飞) means fly; ji1 (机) means machine. Not always the case (e.g. “carpet” in English has nothing to do with “cars” or “pets”)! Note that fei1 can be seen as a stick drawing of a crane, a large bird of China, facing left, with two wings on its back. 机 by itself can be “how many” when pronounced “ji3” (rising-falling tone), or “small table” when pronounced “ji1” (high level tone). Think of 机 then as a <i>machine</i> built with wood (and so 肌 or muscle (ji1), must be a machine made of flesh (think of 月 as moon or parts of the body / flesh, as we will see again in set 3 and set 5, and the many “body” words of set 13).
船	Chuan2	Boat	Boat	Think of the left hand side as a two-seater boat pointed ‘up stream’.
车 or	Che1	car or powered vehicle	Car	A wheeled conveyance – think of this as a picture of a man standing on a skateboard, arms outstretched. Note qi4 (汽) means

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
汽车				vapor or gas.
卡车	Ka3che1	Kart-Car	Truck	Ka3 is made up of 上 on top (means on top) of 下 (means below / bottom) as when you swipe a credit KArD up and down. Ka is often used for sound-words adopted in Chinese that need this sound – as for card and (in this case) cart.
摩托车	mo2tuo1che1	“Mo-tuo” car	Motor-cycle	See above. Sound-word transliteration for motor. The “mo4” (摩 ) character used in “message” means rub or wear-down, and is comprised of two trees (木 ) above a squished hand, under a shelter.
电动车	dian4dong4che1	Electric Moving Vehicle	E-bike	Each Character contributes meaning (not just used for sound). Dian4 (电 ) could be a picture of the armature of a generator; a field electrified by a wire? Dong4 is a “cloud” (云 ) powered (力 ) by wind – or “movement” (动 ).
电梯	Dian4ti1	Electric Ladder	Elevator	Notice Electric (Dian4 电 ) character used again here and for e-bike. Ti1, for ladder, has a “tree” or “wood” (mu4: 木) left side (we will see this again and again) and the right side (弟 ) is by itself di4 for little brother (contributing sound) but also looks a bit like a series of steps or ladder.
地铁	Di4tie3	Earth Iron	Subway	The characters say “earth iron” and can mean underground railway or subway.
公共汽车	Gong1gong4qi4che1	Public Share Vehicle	Bus	One of the few four character words in our 288. Final two characters are the generic word for “car”. Gong (公 ) for Public also used for Police Security (公安 ) or police and (private – owned by the public, not the government) company (公司 ) gong1si1.
冲浪	Chong1lang4ban3	Rush Wave Board	Surfboard	The three characters are: Rinse/Rush (冲 ) , lang4 which is from “bo1lang” (波浪 ) or wave) and Board 板 (note the left side of this

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
板				character is wood or tree (木), the right side “fan3” (反) which contributes to the “sound” which is of course “ban3” (rhymes with “fan3”). 反 means “turn over” – easy to picture a surfer doing that!
滑板	Hua2ban3	Slide Board	Skate-board	Note there are 3 words ending in “Ban3” (板). Hua2 here is slippery, smooth, slide, etc. Can mean cunning, crafty...
滑雪板	Hua2xue3ban3	Sliding snow board	Skis	The top of the character for snow means rain (雨); the bottom was a symbol for hand – frozen rain you can sweep holding a broom is 雪 snow.
独木舟	Du2mu4zhou3	Du Wood Boat	Canoe	From “dugout” canoe, Du2mu4 is transliteration of dugout that uses the wood character) and zhou3 (舟) is the left side of the boat character we started with (see above) – two-seater canoe pointing up.
冰刀	Bing1dao1	Ice Knife	Ice Skates	Straightforward compound word. Left character (冰) is water radical (冫) next to the character for water itself (水) meaning ice; right character is standard character for Knife.
消防车	Xiao1fang2che1	Prevent-fire (disappear, protect) vehicle	Fire engine	Xiao1fang2 means “fire prevention”, from two characters meaning “disappear” and “guard or protect” (but also embankment). Di1fang2, using this Fang2, is the common word for “place”. So “fire prevention vehicle”. (Fire prevention = ‘protect from disappearance’?)
救护车	Jiu4hu4che1	Rescue (relieve, protect) vehicle	Ambulance	Jiu4hu4 means give first-aid; rescue or relieve. The middle character hu4 is also used in “Nurse”: 护士 (hu4shi) (note: 士 for scholar differs from 土 for earth / dirt.)
警车	Jing3che1	Police Car	Police Car	The jing3 here is from jing3cha2 (警察), which means “police”. Its components are “respect” (敬) over (言) or yan2, “words”. The word for “respect”: 尊敬 zūnjìng

The characters and pictures for this set are included in the table below.

ambu- lance		救护车	police car		警车
<b>bike</b> bicycle		自行车	skate- board		滑板
<b>boat</b>		船	skis		滑雪板
canoe		独木舟	subway		地铁
<b>E-bike</b>		电动车	surf- board		冲浪板
fire engine		消防车	truck		卡车
ice skates		冰刀	ele- vator		电梯
<b>motor</b> -cycle		摩托车	bus		公共 汽车
airplane plane		飞机	car		汽车

## 2. Set 2 – “Basic Foods 1”

In this second set of words we will see several characters repeated, and which can help us to recognize food words not in the set. These include:

- Guo3 or 果 which means “fruit”. This character means fruit. The word for “fruit” is “水果”, literally “water-fruit”. It appears in our set in the words for Apple, but is also used in the words for orchard, fruit juice, fruit tree, rind, and nut related words, and in words where “fruit” is used as in the “fruit of your labor”. Fruit is composed of “field” (田) over “tree” (木).
- Xiang1 or 香 as in “fragrant”, scented or appetizing. This is the same Xiang1 as in Xiang1Gang3 or “Hong Kong” as it is known by some (the characters are literally ‘fragrant harbor’). This will appear in the word for cilantro (or coriander for the British) and Banana here, but also in words for sesame, fennel, and as anise. Xiang1 looks like “grain” made pungent by being left in the “sun” (禾, 日)
- Dou4 or 豆 which means “bean” which we will see later in “Dou4fu” (豆腐) for Tofu, and is used in soybean (大豆), literally “big bean” (da4dou4). In this set it is used in the word for peas, potato and string beans. The character has an origin in a picture of food or vessel.
- Cai or 菜 is a multi-purpose character and word that means both “vegetable” and “dish” (of vegetables etc.). visually the character depicts the “grain” radical on top, for clarity (it is 艹 ) then a “hand” picking things off a “tree”). In this set it is used in the words for string beans, cilantro, celery, and chives. It is also a useful character by itself. We will see it later in greens / Chinese cabbage.
- Gua1 or 瓜 is the word for “melon”, and gives us the words for “dong1qua1” or “east melon” for a popular and nutritious melon used in China for great soup dishes; “west melon” or, as it is known in the West, “water-melon”; and, for this set, “south melon” or “nan2qua1” – aka Pumpkin, also a common food vegetable in China. Other words containing Gua1 include words for melons, gourds or squash of

various kinds and their components and by-products. Huang-gua (黄瓜) or “yellow melon” is cucumber.

Information on the characters for set 2 is presented below, followed by the characters and pictures.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
苹果	ping2guo3	Apple fruit	apple	Grain or plant radical 艹 (as in 菜) over the character 平 which means “level” followed by char for “fruit”. Note that the fruit char is field (田) over a tree (木).
香蕉	xiang1jia o1	Fragrant plantain	banana	Remember xiang1 for fragrant (see above). Other than the clue from “fragrant”, not much to go on to remember this one. You will meet (佳) in Set 8 as part of other characters; here with a grass radical above and fire below, the “bird with a short tail” might be sitting in a banana tree!
桃子	tao2zi	Peach noun-marker.	peach	The best clue is the noun-suffix “zi” or 子 that we see again and again marking nouns from fork and spoon to trousers and hat. The tao2 character has a left side that is “tree” (again!) and a right side that is a low frequency character for omen (兆), which is also used in choose, jump (set 16) and flee: 挑, 跳 and 逃. Tree-omen aka peach?
猕猴桃	mi2hou2t ao2	Mi2 monkey peach	kiwi	Few fruits have exotic three character names, so the name for this exotic fruit from New Zealand is also memorable. Even though kiwi actually originated in China. And mi2hou2 is a rhesus monkey, so we have a “monkey peach” as being the word for kiwi. If that helps.
草莓	cao3mei2	Grass Berry	Strawberry	Two characters under the grain / plant radical: the first looks like a morning flower (早) and the second the word for “every” (每) (see set 9). Every morning flower under plant signs = Strawberry
米饭	mi3fan4	Rice Food	rice	The first character is rice; the second character is the word for food, as in Fan4dian (饭店) for restaurant or literally “Food store”. Together they form the word for “cooked rice”.
玉米	yu4mi3	Jade Rice	corn	The first character is for Jade, which is itself the character for King (王) with a drop on his toe. King and yellow have similar pronunciations



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				(wang2 and huang2) so “corn” can be remembered as a kind of “yellow rice”.
番茄	fan1qie2	Fan1qie2	tomato	The first character looks like a lid, on top of rice (米 ) on top of a field (田 ). The second character looks like the word ‘add’ or jia1 (加 ) under the grain / plant radical (艹). The qie2 character is also the first character of “eggplant”, below. Another word for tomato is “西红柿” or xi1hong2 shi4 and those characters are “west red persimmon” which is maybe easier - or not.
土豆	tu3dou4	Earth Bean	potato	Earth bean is good, and we have seen each of these two characters in other contexts – subway = earth + iron, and Tofu (set 10) and other bean words.
南瓜	nan2gua1	South Melon	pumpkin	Two good characters to know, and a popular food consumed in China. Remember the shape of the “Gua1” character as sprawling plants on the ground before squash, melons, etc start to grow.
莲藕	lian2ou3	Lotus Root	Lotus root	The first character is the key – it looks like a car (车) on the road (outer part of 道 ) under the plant radical. Think of the highly interconnected lotus root leaves to remember this great dish from Hangzhou.
菜豆	cai4dou4	Vegetable Bean	String beans	Vegetable-bean. Two important characters, one easy word. A common ingredient and everyday food.
红薯	hong2shu3	Red Yam	Sweet potato	Basic red potato. Red is made from “silk” (丝) and work (工): 红. Visualize dyeing silk red for use in Chinese festivals. Yam (also in set 15) is more difficult – it shows the grain radical over a net over “者” or “one who..” so “one who nets food?”
芋头	yu4tou	Yu2 Head	taro	The Yu2 character (芋) is used for taro. It shows a plant radical over a common surname with the same pronunciation: yu2 (于). The second character is used for “head” and looks like a stick figure moving to the right. See set 13 for “head” and “hair” (头, 头发). Mr. Yu2’s head.
豌豆	wan1dou4	Wan1 bean	peas	The first character is composed of a left side (dou4, or bean) and a right side that has the sound of wan1) but whose meaning doesn’t matter (weather we look at 宛 or 宛). And the second character is again “bean”. So this basic bean-bean word means “pea” a basic kind of bean.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
韭菜	jiu3cai4	Flowered-garlic, Vegetable	chives	The first character is for flowering garlic or “Chinese chives”; the figure is said to come from the growing leaves of the plant. The second character is our friend “vegetable”.
香菜	Xiang1cai4	Fragrant vegetable	Cilantro	Two key words and characters. Grain – he2 (禾) over “sun” (日) gets FRAGRANT. See discussion above.
芹菜	Qin2cai4	Celery Vegetable	Celery	Qin2 shows jin1 (斤), a basic unit of measure, now a half kilogram, under a GRASS radical.

apple		苹果	peas		豌豆
banana		香蕉	potato		土豆
cilantro		香菜	pumpkin		南瓜
celery		芹菜	rice		米饭
chives		韭菜	strawberry		草莓
corn		玉米	string beans		菜豆
kiwi		猕猴桃	sweet potato		红薯
lotus root		莲藕	taro		芋头
peach		桃子	tomato		番茄

### 3. Set 3 – “Clothes 1”

In this third set of words we will see several characters repeated, and which can help us to recognize words generally. These include:

- Yi1 or 衣, which is a general word for clothes or garment. It can appear as 衤.
- Zi5 or 子. This character in the third tone means child, but at the end of a word, with no tone, is a general noun suffix, helping to mark the word as a noun.
- Wai4 or 外, which means “outside”. Used in many words and phrases such as 外国人 or wai4guo2ren2 for “foreigner” (outside country person).
- Jin1 or 巾, which means “piece of cloth” and is used in the words for scarf, as well as in the words for napkin (餐巾 or can1jin1), towel (手巾 or shou3jin1) and blanket (被巾 or bei4jin1).

The words in the set and some clues to help remember their shape are presented in the table below.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
汗衫 / T-恤	han4shan1	sweat shirt  (T-xu4 – sound-loan)	t-shirt	This is a “t-shirt” or unlined, upper body garment. Think of the left side as a wet person (stick figure, water radical to left). Shan1 is a squished form of Yi or 衣 for clothing on the left side with 彡 on the right (think of a drying wind).
衬衫	chen4shan1	Liner shirt	shirt	Shirt or blouse. The first character has the left side which is the same as the shan1 character on the right – a squished form of Yi for clothing, this time paired with a right side of 寸 or cun4 for inch (visualize a hand with thumb and forefinger separated).
外衣	wai4yi1	Outside clothes	coat	The two characters combine to make the meaning of the word.
裤子	ku4zi	Pants noun-suffix	pants	Here Yi1 for clothes is combined with ku4 (库) for the sound (means warehouse). The

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				character is a car in a factory (车 in 厂) = warehouse, but only the sound is used here; meaning is from the left side (clothes).
短裤	duan3ku4	Short Pants	shorts	Duan3 is important – SMS or text messages are “duan3xin1” or short messages. But as to why the character looks like something about shooting an arrow 矢 into a bean 豆 is anyone’s guess.
袜子	wa4zi	End-Clothes noun-marker	socks	The left character combines yi1 for clothes on the left side with 末 (mo4) on the right that means “end”. Mnemonic: socks cover the “end” of your body.
鞋子	xie2zi	Shoe noun-marker	shoes	The left side of the xie2 character comes from 革 meaning leather (ge2); the right side is two “earth” characters stacked (土) (圭 is an archaic char) -- so leather on two feet (that stand on the earth) = shoes.
拖鞋	tuo1xie2	Pull shoes	slippers	The left character means pull or drag; the right character is shoes. so slippers are shoes you pull on. A humorous source says “Try not to confuse 拖 tuo1 with 施 for shi1 'execute'.”
裙子	qun2zi	Skirt noun-marker	skirt	Again we have a left side from “clothes” and the right side here is a mystery. Technically it looks like 君 or “ruler”, made up of 尹 (yin3) and 口 (kou3) --ancient word for government official; mouth. No help here for meaning.\
连衣裙	lian2yi1qun2	Connect clothes skirt	dress	One piece dress – connect (lian2) shows a car on the road (see lotus root, set 2) meaning connect (no grain radical here). Three characters also make it easier to remember.
围巾	wei2jin1	Surround cloth	scarf	Wei2 means surround, and the character is itself fully enclosed. The character for cloth is a picture of a cloth lying over the arm. In this case it could be wrapped around a neck.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
腰带	yao1dai4	Waist belt	belt	The yao1 character is a confusion of things – but 要 is yao4 for ‘want’ and 月 is yue4 for month or flesh (as with body parts). Moon-want doesn’t get close to “waist” for me – but studies show changes over time from a woman figure with hands on her waist (body). Woman (女) can still be seen on the bottom right side of this character. Dai4 also has many meanings and uses, but <i>belt</i> and <i>bring</i> are the top two (along with zone and carry).
雨伞	yu3san3	Rain umbrella	umbrella	Umbrellas for sun are more common than those for rain in China (at least in summer!) Both characters are quite visual for representing their meanings.
帽子	mao4zi	Hat noun-marker	hat	The hat character is made of cloth on the left, and on the right we have “cover” over the “eyes” (目, 目).
穿衣	chuan1yi1	Wear / pierce Clothes	To dress	To contrast with the noun “dress”, this verb means put on clothes. Your arms “pierce” the arm holes.
眼镜	yan3jing4	Eye Mirror (or lens)	eye glasses	The left side of yan3 here means “eye”; the right 艮 makes a phonetic contribution. For Jing4, remember 镜子 is mirror. And similar but quite different in appearance to 眼睛 - which is yan3jing (neutral tone on jing) for “eyes” (see set 13).
衣服	yi1fu	Clothes Service	clothes	The fu character here is the same as in 服务员 fu2wu4yuan2, the generic word for service person (fu2wu4 being service). The fu character has “moon” on the left, -- think of steering a boat by the moon, or in service to it.
手套	shou3tao4	Hand cover	gloves	We will see “hand” again (手) and tao4 can mean “set” or cover. So a set of clothes – yi1tao4yi1fu – also means “a suit”. But Hand is your big clue for recognizing the word for Gloves.

The characters and pictures for set three are presented below.

<b>belt</b>		腰帶	<b>scarf</b>		围巾
<b>clothes</b>		衣服	<b>shirt</b>		衬衫
<b>coat</b>		外衣	<b>shoes</b>		鞋子
<b>dress</b>		连衣裙	<b>shorts</b>		短裤
<b>glasses</b>		眼镜	<b>skirt</b>		裙子
<b>gloves</b>		手套	<b>slippers</b>		拖鞋
<b>hat</b>		帽子	<b>socks</b>		袜子
<b>pants</b>		裤子	<b>t-shirt</b>		汗衫, T恤
<b>put on, dress</b>		穿衣	<b>umbrella</b>		雨傘

## 4. Set 4 – “Adjectives 1”

Key words in this set that will help with learning other words include the following:

- Gao1 or 高 means tall, and is a high frequency word. It is used both in the literal sense (as in ‘a tall person’) but also for “high level” (the “gau1kao1” or “high test” is the short name for example is the Chinese college entrance examination). You can think of it as a tall building. But don’t confuse it with 宫, gong1, meaning palace and often used in restaurant names and such. It looks similar.
- Se4 or 色 means color. Some words for color have the Se4 in them for clarity; others – red, black and white, need no suffix (and in fact it would be wrong and misunderstood in many contexts).
- Bai2 or 白 means white, and is used in non-color words too (明白 or “ming2bai2” means “understand”, and is literally “bright white”).
- Chang2 or 长 means long. It looks a little like “ka3” 卡 that we met earlier, but only before looking closely. This is a high frequency word worth knowing well.

And you will see below characters for Red and Short, both of which have already appeared as part of other words we have reviewed. Red will appear yet again (in 红烧肉, a famous dish).

The table below lists the words in set 4 with information to help you remember and understand them. Afterward, the pictures for the set are printed.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
红	hong2	Red	red	As described before, think of silk (丝) being dyed at work (工) – and what says work better than a steel i-beam? – for use in Chinese festivals (always a sea of red).
蓝色	lan2se4	Indigo color	blue	The first character by itself can be the noun for indigo plant. With the second character, which means “color”, it means “blue”. Compare with lan2, 篮, meaning “basket” and used in lan2jiu2 or ‘basketball’. The color lan2, derived from the indigo plant, has the grain radical on top, whereas “basket” lan2 has the bamboo radical on top as a woven object.



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
黄	huang2	Yellow	yellow	Almost looks like a person. Sometimes followed by se4 (color), which helps make it easier to recognize.
白	bai2	White: drop on the sun.	white	The character 日 or ri4 means day, and is a picture of the sun with a dot in the middle, made square. Now with a drop (of fire?) on it, it means white.
黑	hei1	Black or dark	black	I think of this as a front on view of a black cat seated, looking at me with those eyes.... The four little paws might also be the fire radical
热	re4	Hot: hands and pellets over fire.	hot	Here notice the hot coals or flames below the character. This “fire” radical will be part of other characters, often where the heat is relevant. Sometime fire looks more like 火 – the full form character. Above the fire I think I see “hand” in squished form (扌) and 丸 meaning pill or pellet. So we can think of hands throwing coals into the fire to keep it going.
冷	leng3	cold	cold	Left side “冫” is the left side of ‘ice’, (set 11, 冰) or “two dot water” radical; and the right side “令” or ling4, for <i>make</i> or <i>cause</i> .
温暖	wen1nuan3	Warm warm	Warm	Wen1 by itself can mean warm; it has components water, sun and container (冫, 日 & 皿). Nuan3 can mean warm, genial, and is made from 日 (ri4) 'sun' and 爰 (yuan2) 'drag', as in the days get warm when the sun drags on.
凉	liang2	Cool: water-capital (Beijing, a “cool” place)	Cool	This character has the two-dot water radical next to the familiar character for “capital”, as in “north capital” or Beijing (formerly Peking): 北京
湿	she1-wet	Wet: water and sun on two flowers growing	wet	This character decomposes as water (three dot, or standard water radical) 氵 followed by “xian2” or appear, 显, which is itself made up of day or sun 日 and “ye4” or commerce 业 which looks like two flowers growing. Hence: water makes the flowers grow in the sun – and makes things WET.
绿色	lv4se4	Green Color	green	Contains “silk” radical 纟 what must be a green plant growing out of a variant of “water” (normally 水).
褐色	he4se4	Potato-sack Color	brown	The left hand side of the first char is a squished form of “yi1” 衣 for “clothes”; the right hand side is a rare component used in drink and thirsty. The left hand character he4 by itself means “coarse cloth”, as might have once been called a gunnysack or potato sack. Hence “coarse cloth” color or brown. Hint: the only color that starts with a cloth radical.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
橙色	cheng2se4	Orange color	orange	The left character means “orange” as in fruit; the character signals its origin with a left hand side meaning “tree” (mu4) 木. The right hand side of the left character is “ascend”. “Climb and orange tree” is our clue – the only color that starts with the tree radical.
紫色	zi3se4	Purple color	purple	The top of the left character is 此 or “this” (ci3); the bottom is a form of the silk character. The sound, zi3 is close to “ci3”. The only color beside red with a silk radical.
灰色	hui1se4	Grey color	grey	An easy one: a fire under a roof causes smoke; the color of smoke. 灰 can also mean dust.
高	gao1	Tall	tall	As discussed above, a widely used concept word. The picture, too, is a concept: something tall / stacked up.
短	duan3	Short: arrow-bean.	short	Short was used in set 3 – “short pants” or “shorts”. The right hand side is “bean”, used often in set 2. Shooting and arrow at a bean, it seems, refers to something “short”.
长	chang2	long	long	Historically, might be long hair tied with an ornament. Means long or lasting. Every city in China it seems has a “long peace” or “chang2’an1” (长安) boulevard – Long and Lasting Peace being the fondest hope of the Chinese people.

The characters and pictures for set four are presented below.

black		黑	purple		紫色
brown		褐色	red		红
cold		冷	short		短
cool		凉	tall		高
gray		灰色	warm		温暖
green		绿色	wet		湿
hot		热	white		白
long		长	yellow		黄
orange		橙色	blue		蓝色

## 5. Set 5 – “Adjectives 2”

This set contains additional adjectives. Key words or characters in this set include:

- Kuai4 as in (快) is a very common sound and word component, in part because of the popularity of two other characters in the same family, with the same pronunciation (initial sound, final sound AND tone). The character 快 means “fast”. The left part “忄” is a compressed form of the “heart” radical (心) while the right part looks like “da4” or Big (大) with a bent cross-stroke through it (like the one seen in “five”: wu3 or 五). I visualize this character as a Big person, a marathon runner with great HEART running and carrying a long scroll or message (which is the bent cross stroke). The story – and the character – reminds me where the word ‘marathon’ comes from. But note also that “kuai4zi” (with a noun-marker at the end) are what we call Chopsticks, and this kuai4 is the same character except that it also has a bamboo radical on top, signifying a wooden artifact (筷). Another common word for a “piece” of something – like money – is kuai4 as in “块” – note the left hand side is now a form of “土” or earth, as in “a piece of earth, a chunk, a clod of dirt”. Lastly, “happy” is “kuai4le” or 快乐, so “happy birthday” is “sheng1ri kuai4le” (birth day happy) and “happy new year” is “xin1nian2 kuai4le” (new year happy). Three of these “kuai4” characters have the exact same sound and tone.
- Bu4 or 不 is “Not”, a very important distinction in any sentence! Sounds like “boo” in terms of an English, non-pinyin, spelling, and “boo yaw!” (not have!) and “boo doy!” (not right!) are important phrases. (bu4yao4, bu4dui4) in everyday life.
- Da4 or 大 means big and is best remembered as part of this sequence: 人 大 天 夫, which is a person (two legged stick figure, as you might do with your own hand walking on a table top); “Big” or a person with arms outstretched to look “big”, perhaps to scare off predators; “sky” or heavens – so there is now a line above the head of a person with arms outstretched; and lastly “husband” – a person with four arms, to better help them care for their spouse.

- Hao3, or 好 which is the very common word “good”, and part of the common greeting “ni3hao3” (or ‘you good’, or “hello”). This character is a “woman” (女) next to a child (子) – and how better to describe “good” than a mother and child together?
- Sometimes called the “road” radical (辶)– as seen on the left and bottom of these three characters for path (dao4), enter (jin4) and far(yuan3), can be seen here: 道, 进 & 远. In this set it is used as the first part of the word for “lost”: 迷. More formally, it is the “go” radical or “chao4” (𠂇).

The complete group of words in this set is described below.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
苗条	miao2tiao	Seedling-twigg	Thin	Miao2 shows a grain radical over a rice field (田); hence seedling. Tiao here could show small branches (𣎵) at the top of a tree (木). Tiao here represents anything long and thin.
胖	pang4	Fat or plump	Fat	Flesh (or moon) is (月); the right hand side 半 (ban4) means half and contributes to the ‘sound. Flesh-and-a-half ==> plump.
快乐	kuai4le4	Fast-pleasure	Happy	Left character is the word “fast” (below); the right side is like tree with a crooked hat on top (a bit tipsy?).
生气	sheng1qi4	Birth-vapor	Angry	Not an adjective, this word means ‘get angry’. Sheng1 can mean “give birth”, grow, cause to happen, life, etc. (birthday is sheng1ri4). This “qi4” is like the qi4 in car – qi4che (汽车) but without the left hand water radical. Think of a woman shouting vapors during childbirth to help remember this means ‘get angry’.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
强	qiang2	Strong	strong	The left side is a big strong “bow” for archery; the right side is obscure and lets think of it as person holding the bow – a STRONG person. This character might be on your appliance for the “high” setting.
弱	ruo4	Weak	Weak	This means weak or feeble, so you can think of this as a drawing of the wings of a young bird, not yet big and strong. This character might be on the ‘low’ or weak setting of your dryer or heater.
好	hao3	Good	good	Woman nu3(女) next to child zi3(子). As the “u” in nu3 has an umlaut and is pronounced with curled tongue, it is properly shown as nv3 (with a v) in pinyin. Both characters (or halves of this char) are somewhat pictographic.
坏	huai4	Bad: Earth + not	bad	Huai4 means bad or broken. Spoiled. Not good – left out on the ground (earth) and spoiled.
最好	zui4hao3	Most Good	best	Zui4 for “most” can be used to modify other adjectives – bad, close, far etc. When I look at this character I see “day” or “sun” (日) over “ear” (耳) next to “again” (又). I think of my MOST favorite music I want to <i>hear again</i> any day.
不错	bu4cuo4	Not wrong	Not bad	Cuo4 means “wrong” – and a common expression for “pretty good” is “bu4cuo4” (the c in pinyin is tricky at first – worth serious study). See separate info on each of these characters in this set.
不	bu4	Not	not	A very very important character and word. I visualize a bird flying – wrongly – into the ceiling and being stopped. NO! it can’t fly up into the sky THROUGH the ceiling!! Note that the character is pronounced with a falling tone – Bu4 – but when preceding a fourth tone (as in bu4cuo4 or bu4dui4) it is pronounced with a rising tone: bu2.
快	kuai4	Fast	fast	As noted in the intro, a heart radical on the left, stick figuring running a marathon with great heart, carrying a scroll across his body – give us “kuai4” for FAST.
迷路	mi2lu4	Lose-road	lost	Mi3 is made from the character for rice, mi3 (米) on the “road” radical. If the birds eat the rice trail you are leaving on the road, you will be LOST. The second character, lu4, is on almost

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				every city street sign in China and means “road”. Road is made from “foot” (足) plus “each” (各).
大	da4	Big	Large or big	A person with their arms spread wide, indicating “large” or trying to appear “big”.
微	wei1	Tiny	Tiny or micro	Use for “micro” or tiny (Microsoft is wei1ruan3 using this character). A complex three-part character, try to make your own story out of this one. Components might be footsteps (𠂔) and strike (攴); with perhaps mountain (山) and “one” in the middle above (几). Remember that “big” is a “small” or simple character, and that TINY is complex with many strokes...
对	dui4	Right	Correct	Made of “again” (又) and “inch” (寸), think of “measure twice, cut once” as a good rule of thumb for making sure you are RIGHT before you take an action you cannot fix.
错	cuo4	Wrong	Wrong	The left side (钅) is a compressed form of “gold” (金) or metal; the right side looks like two adjacent “earths” (土) over the sun(日). As a GOLD standard, earth over the sun, instead of visa-versa, is just WRONG!
慢	man4	Slow	slow	I think it is best to remember a) the heart radical on the left; and b) something that looks like a jolly roundish man in a clown suit walking slowing (maybe the heart radical is a walking stick to help him). The right side being a stack of “sun”, sideways “eye” or “net”, and bottom-sitting “again” -- just doesn’t lead anywhere worthwhile in analyzing the origin of this character. Note: whenever you leave a restaurant, and perhaps someone’s house, they may say “man4 zou3” – “walk slowly”. There is no English equivalent. It reminds me of young students asking me how to say “have a nice day” in Chinese. You could...but you would get very strange looks.

慢	slow		最好	best	
对	correct	$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 2 \\ \hline 4 \end{array}$ ✓	坏	bad	
错	wrong	$\begin{array}{r} 2 \\ + 2 \\ \hline 3 \end{array}$ ✗	好	good	
微	tiny		弱	weak	
大	big		强	strong	
迷路	lost		胖	fat	
快	fast		生气	angry	
不错	not bad		快乐	happy	
不	not		苗条	thin	



## 6. Set 6 – “Verbs 1”

The words in this set illustrate the following key concepts for learning Chinese characters:

- Kou3, or 口, represents mouth, or opening (as in the mouth of a river). This is found in two of our one character words – for sing(唱) and kiss (吻), which both involve the mouth directly, and in the word for “exit” (or “go out of the mouth”) . Chu1 (出), or emit / go out, is a verb; written as “chu1kou3” or 出口, this word is the noun for “exit” and often seen on signs.
- Zhao3dao4, or (找到), represents an example of combining two one character words, both in this set – seek (找) and arrive (到) into a new word – “find”, which seems very logical: seeking to the moment of arrival at what you seek, gives you “find”.
- Du2, or 读, is the first character we have seen with the 讠 or word radical, which means (言 yán) words. This radical often marks words as being “language or speech related”, as with the following words: speak (a verb), speech or talk and word (both nouns): 说, 话 and 词. Of course, the connection to language is less precise for words like “please”, “count”, “theory” (but in this instance can mean ‘talk about’) and “remember” (请, 计, 论, 记).





Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
玩	wan2	play	play	This character looks like 王 and 元 to me, which would be “king” (wang2) and “money” (yuan2) or primary. Visualize a King playing with his money.
来	lai2	come	come	This character can be seen as rice (mi3) 米 with a lid (亠) on it. When cooked under a lid, rice will be a meal, to which you should COME.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
去	qu4	Go	go	I prefer to see this character as a person riding a bicycle, or a ship coming straight at me. It is composed of 土 (or earth) on 厶 which is a radical by itself, but most familiar in 云 and 运: cloud and transport (clouds on 'road'). 厶 is also found in 么, 公 and 台, but with no easy association I can explain.
找到	zhao3dao4	Seek+arrive	find	The combination of "seek" and "arrive"; see the individual characters, described in this set.
进	jin4	Enter	enter	A simplified character, it is composed of 开(kai1) for open and the radical 辶. Think of the "open road" as a way to access or ENTER new places.
出口	chu1kou3	Leave + egress	exit	As described above, the noun for "exit" is made up of "chu1" for leave or emit and kou3 for mouth (literal or conceptual). Chu3 is made up of two "mountain" or shan1 characters (山) (for falling off the mountain = emit, leave)
找	zhao3	Seek: hand+spear	seek	This character combines the notion of self, or "hand", with spear or dagger. Speculation is that one gets a spear in hand before going to SEEK an enemy (or prey).
到	dao4	Arrive or until	arrive	Visualize the character's left side as an arrow hitting its mark (or ARRIVING) and the right side a knife to cut it out (and giving the character its sound). 刂 is the side-radical form of 刀 or knife (dao4).
扔	reng1	throw	throw	The left side is the "hand" radical, which is our best clue. Think of the right side as a fishing poll and line you cast with a THROWing motion. The right side, 乃, is most familiar from the word for milk: 奶 (nai3).
吻	wen3	Kiss	kiss	The mouth (kou3) on the left side is the first clue; perhaps the picture shows a small animal on the right (dog) kissing a (square) face (to the

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				left). The right hand side 勿 by itself would mean “do not!” (wu3) and is seen on “no smoking” signs.
看	kan4	See or look	look	Always described as showing a hand (手) shading the eyes (目) to “see” (both are characters are in set 13).
读	du2	Read	read	The left side indicates the word may have something to do with words. The right side is by itself “sell” (卖), or “buy” (买) with a “十” or “ten” character on top. I prefer to think of this character as something done by the “head” (头) tou2 of a “scholar” (士) shi4, even though this is not quite exact in terms of stroke types.
唱	chang4	Sing	sing	The left side 口 indicates ‘mouth’; the right side has two sets of two mouths (日) – and makes me visualize a whole group SINGing! Of course 日 is day or sun, but sometimes it can be a mouth with a visible tongue!
笑	xiao4	laugh	laugh	Here the 夭 (yao1) looks like 天 (tian1), except note the top horizontal stroke slopes down to the left (in xiao4). Imagine a person slightly bent in laughter, arms outstretched – with a bamboo radical over head. Perhaps in this case the bamboo appears to be eyes, squinting in laughter.
跑	pao3	Run: foot-wrap.	run	The left side of pao3 is a compressed form of 足 or “foot”. The right side 包 is bao3 and means wrap.
走	zou3	Walk	walk	Similar to zu2 for foot (足), zou3 can be visualized as a person with a big foot walking. But it is constructed as “earth” (土) on top of “stop” (止), where stop has been shifted for inclusion underneath – as in “to be” (shi4) and decide (ding4): 是 and 定.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
飞	fei1	Fly	fly	The word for flight in China comes from a simple stick figure of a Crane, head facing left, tail slightly up, wings symbolized by the pair of strokes on the back.
爬	pa2	Climb	climb	The left side is 爪, as in claw (zhao3). This is the same zhao3 as in feng4zhao3, while literally meaning phoenix claw, it is the “chicken feet” widely consumed as food. The right side “巴” is ba2, indicating the pa2 sound here for the word. Also, notice how gua1 (瓜) or melon (set two) is different from 爪 zhao3 or claw!

Another note: the ba2 part of “climb” is often used in names for “bars” and to refer to “jiu3ba” or 酒吧, a place for alcoholic drinks (酒 being alcohol). 爸 has the same sound, and is the character for ‘ba4ba’ or father.

跑	run		到	arrive	
走	walk		看	look	
爬	climb		读	read	
飞	fly		玩	play	
出口	exit		笑	laugh	
进	enter		吻	kiss	
来	come		唱	sing	
找	seek		扔	throw	
找到	find		去	go	

## 7. Set 7 – “Verbs 2”

Set seven contains a few more verbs or action related words. It also illustrates additional general principles in recognizing Chinese characters. These specific words come with some additional lessons as provided below.

- Chi1 (吃) and he1(喝) for eat and drink both have kou3 (口) on the left side, as they involve the “mouth”.
- Kai3che1 or “drive” (开车) reads literally like “open car”. Kai3 (开) has many general uses such as start, begin, and operate in addition to “open”. So Chinese person will use “kai3” to “turn on” a light or other switch (and guan1 (关) or close to shut it off); train station signs will show the leaving time or departure gates / tracks using the using 开 character (among others).
- Zuo4 (坐) for sit is used both as in “take a seat” and as in “ride a train”. Further confusion can come from the three common characters / words pronounced zou4: 做, 作, 坐. The first two words mean “do” or “make”, but the first is mostly used in the sense of “manufacture” or “produce” (the verb); whereas the latter is used in the sense of doing, as in homework or employment (作业 or 工作). To make matters worse (or just potentially more confusing for the beginner), the same sound (initial and final, zuo) with a different tone, is used for the common words “yesterday” (2<sup>nd</sup> tone) and “left” (3<sup>rd</sup> tone) : 昨(天) and 左. So listen for those tones!
- Ting2 (停) in “park”, which means literally ‘stop car’, has a left-hand-side “person” radical. Note that 亻 is the form of 人 when it appears as part of a character. Note also the difference from 彳, which is “step forward” (and found at the beginning of “tiny” or wei4 (微) and (行)xing2 / hang2.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
说	shuo1	Say	speak	The left side clues the word has to do with “words”; the right side shows sounds coming up out of the mouth (口) over a person (legs for the body are show as 儿 ).
坐	zuo4	Sit	sit	Two people (人) sitting on the ground (土). I visualize this character as a person seated in an armchair facing me directly. Whatever jogs your memory here is good.
开车	kai1che1	Operate (start / open) Car	drive	Che1 for vehicle was covered in set 1. Some remember kai1 from its origin from two hands reaching from the sides to remove a bolt from the door; others think of the OPENing created by drawing back a Bow (where the middle line is the arrow).
转	zhuan3	turn	turn	It might help to know that the left and right parts are Che1 for vehicle and 专 or zhuan1 for special, but I recommend seeing the 车 followed by “squiggles” for TURNing.
停车	ting2che1	Stop - car	park	The ting2 character is on millions of red, octagonal “stop” signs in China, making it easier to absorb – if you are living in China. That the left side the ‘person’ and the right side mashing the word for ‘tall’ 高 (gao1) onto a “nail” 丁 (ding1) (and by itself 亭 means “pavilion” – a tall structure made with nails) doesn’t really lead to “stop!”. Learn “Stop”; then remember “park” = stop + car.
哭	ku1	To cry	To cry	See two eyes on a stick figure, with a teardrop on the right side. Think “cry”. [Scholars might see two “mouths” over a “dog” (犬), -- howling enough to make you cry. But this seems unnecessarily complex.]
怕	pa4	to fear	To fear	Left hand side is “heart” radical (心 becomes 忄; don’t confuse it with tree: 木). Right side is “white” (from set 4, “drop of / on the sun”). Heart races; skin goes “white” (pale) → when you become afraid.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
抽烟	chou1yan1	'take out from' + smoke; emit smoke	Smoke (cigarettes, pipe, etc)	Chou1 has "hand" radical (扌) next to "from" (由); the right side illustrates the meaning (take out from). Yan1 is seen all over China at places selling "cigarettes". It means "smoke" or "Cigarette", and embodies "cause fire". It is made from "fire" (火) and "cause" (因). Further: 因为 yin1wei4 means "because" (set 8, next).
踢足球	ti1zu2qiu2	Kick-foot-ball	Play soccer	Qiu2 means 'ball' and is used in many sports words, from ping pong to basketball. Ti1 has the same left side as 跑 or, and zu2 for kick is quite similar to walk (走) (both in set 6). Try to remember "foot" and "ball"; the rest will fit together easily.
打网球	da3wang3 qiu2	Hit net ball	Play tennis	Here the notion of "play" is "hit", versus "kick" for soccer. Wang3 is a great character, in this age of the Internet; it often means "the net" or "internet". So "hit net ball" means play tennis.
游泳	you2yong3	Swim-swim	swim	You2 means swim; it has three parts, sort of, starting with a three dot water radical and ending with 'child' (子). The middle contains fang1 (方) for square or place (perhaps a pool). Otherwise, it is sort of random. The second character has both the same water radical and the full water character (水), with a "drop" on top of that! Water everywhere! Swimming it is.
吃	chi1	Eat	eat	This character combines "mouth" with qi3 for beg (乞), which suggests eating.
喝	he1	Drink	drink	This character combines "mouth" with he2 (曷) which is a general question word (how? Why?) In this case, the 'mouth' is <i>drinking</i> .
睡觉	shui4jiao4	Sleep-perceive	sleep	Shui4 looks like a bed next to a dresser, seen from above. The components are eye or mu4(目) and chui2 (垂) for 'hang down'. Jiao4 is also pronounced jue2 to mean perceive (feel or sense), but as jiao4 it also means sleep. Jiao4 has a top as in xue2(学) and the



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				bottom is Jian4 (见) or “see”, as in the common parting words “see you again”, “see you later” -- or literally “again see” zai4jian4 (再见). Two fourth (falling) tones help distinguish shui4jiao4 from shui3jiao3 (水饺) which are boiled dumplings!
起床	qi3chuang2	Rise (from) bed	Get up; arise	Qi3 is made up of zou3 (走) or go and the ji3 (己) to suggest the character’s sound. Chuang2 is the word for bed, and we see wood or mu4 (木) under a guang3, which looks like a roof (广). This is fitting as beds can be made of wood and under the protection of the roof. So this word is composed of the words for “rising up” and bed.
站立	zhan4li4	Station - stand	Stand up	The first character zhan4 means “stand” and is used in train station / stand or huo3che1zhan4 (火车站) which would then be “fire car station” or actually “railway station”. Notice that left part of zhan4 that gives it the meaning “station” or stand is itself a character, the one on the right – li4 or stand (立). Can mean stand or erect. With two “stands” here, this is easy to associate with “stand up”.
落	luo4	Fall / drop / go down	fall	Luo4 is not a straightforward character. Grain radical on top, water radical on the side. Remainder of the character is ge4 (各), which means “each”. Each seed of grain or drop of water? Hmm. I suggest making your own story for this one.
打	da3	Hit – but also get, play, etc.	hit	Generalized verb that depends on it’s object. Components are “hand” radical and “ding4” the fourth heavenly stem (oh, now it makes sense....). Need to just learn this one. Very simple.

怕	fear		打网球	play tennis	
哭	cry		踢足球	play soccer	
吃	eat		开车	drive	
喝	drink		落下	fall	
睡觉	sleep		停车	park	
起床	get up		转	turn	
抽烟	smoke		站立	stand up	
打	hit		说	speak	
游泳	swim		坐	sit	

## 8. Set 8 – “Queries 1”

Set eight contains some words that are very helpful in forming sentences that are questions. Not that in Chinese, one way of forming a question is to add the “question” particle to the end of an otherwise declarative sentence. So “this is your wife” becomes “is this your wife?” when “ma” (吗) is added to the end of the sentence. Declaration: “Zhe4 shi4 ni3 de tai4tai.” Or “这是你的太太。” Question: “这是你的太太吗? (Zhe4 shi4 ni3 de tai4tai ma?). Note that sentences that are questions by virtue of the fact that they use specific questions words, such as “when”, “where” or “what time” or “how many” (as in “how many people are in your family”) do not need a “ma” interrogative particle at the end.

Other important aspects of this word set are as follows:

- Shen2me (什么) represents the basic concept of “what”, and is used both in the words for “when” and “why”.
- Chi1 (吃) and he1 (喝) for eat and drink both have kou3 (口) on the left side, as they involve the “mouth”.
- Why is “wei4 shen2me”, or (什么时候), which is almost literally “for what” (reason). The wei4 character here means for or on account of – so “why” has the sense of “for what reason”. Similarly “shen2me shi2hou” is almost literally “what time” – set 9, next, introduces “shi2hou” as the word for “time” in the sense of “at what time” (version “duration” or “o’clock”). Shen2me (什么) is also the first part of the popular phrase for “something” as in “shen2me dong1xi” or (什么东西). Dong1xi, for “thing”, is introduced in the next set – and is literally “east-west”. So: did you buy something? Is – word by word – you bought something “ma”? Ni3 mai3 shen2me dong1xi ma? Or 你买什么东西吗?
- Shui2 (谁) (and often shei2) is the word for “who”, and the character looks a lot like the character for “difficult” (nan2) and “push” (tui1) – which are 难 and 推. The common element is “隹”, described by scholars as “bird with a short tail”, but not a word or character itself. It is used in a dozen or so high frequency characters, and many more besides.

- Yin1wei (因为) and Ying1gai(应该), or “because” and “should”, start with characters with similar sounds – the same “initial” sound and tone, but one has a final sound represented by “g” that is very easily not “heard” by foreigners – especially since the second character after Ying1 starts with the ‘g’ sound anyway! A casual listener can be forgiven for thinking both words might start with the same character.
- Na3li (哪里) means “where” but is used by Chinese also as a response to a complement – it shows humility, as the person looks left and right and says “na3li, na3li” – meaning “where is this (good, great, learned, whatever...) person” you are saying nice things about. Chinese, once upon a time, were “put off” by foreigners that said “thank you” in response to a compliment – this would have been interpreted as great hubris if from another Chinese – but increasing exposure to the outside world has vastly muted the impact that such an exchange now has, particularly among Chinese familiar with “foreigner” ways.

Explanations and memory aids for the words in set 9 follow.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
谁	shui2	who	who	Scholars say the right side evolved from the drawing of a short-tail bird. It is an important character component so finding a way to remember it is useful – say the rack of feathers on the back of a bird whose beak you see on the top left, and an extra head-feather leaning forward. That this use of “short tail bird”—having the “word” radical “讠” – can be your clue that this symbolic “word” is a placeholder for the “unknown bird” → “who”.
什么	shen2me		what	The left character, Shen2, has a left hand ‘person’ radical and a right side of “ten” – hence “ten people” who, in this case, form “What” (we don’t know WHAT the ten people are for). The “me” character after shen2 is a suffix character that forms various adverbs and interrogatives – it doesn’t occur by itself. This pair is a high frequency word.
哪里	Na3li	Loosely: which place	where	Both characters here are important. Na3 (哪) has three components: Mouth, something that almost looks like “month” but is not 月, and then the “B” – A component that has a meaning of “Hill” or “mound” associated with it. So we have “mouth” and “那” –

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				not “月 月”. In set 9 we see that “那” by itself is “that”, and when followed by an “r” sounds, is “there” (那儿). It is as if our MOUTH wants to ask <i>where</i> is this special “moon” hanging over a “hill” – with streamers hanging off. WHERE???? The 里 character here is, when by itself, pronounced with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> tone, and can mean inside, as well as village / hometown / native place. It’s use as “village” derives from it’s two components – field (田) and earth (土). A field on the earth – a particular place.
什么时候	shen2me shi2hou	What time	when	See the discussion of “what” in this set and “shi2hou” for “time” in set 9.
为什么	wei4 shen2me	On account of what?	why	For Wei4, think of 力 or “li4” which means “strength” or power, pictured as an elephant. Perhaps the horizontal stroke that extends rightward and curls down is the <i>powerful</i> elephant’s trunk. Then understand the two “丶” characters (dian4 or drops) as hands placed on the side of the elephant to GUIDE it (为). Giving it a reason, a WHY, to go in a particular direction. Guiding the elephant – signifying “why”.
因为	yin1wei	Cause-on-account-of	because	First character is “da” (大) inside a surround, representing a bed (口). A big man lying on a mattress provides the manifestation of the abstract “BECAUSE” – <i>WHY is he just lying down? BECAUSE! (...he can?)</i> To reinforce the concept of causality, we also find the second character of wei4, used in “why”.
应该	ying1gai1	Should-should	should	Ying2 (应) derives historically from a character that was part “eagle”, part “heart”, getting at a noble notion of duty or “should”. Now the simplified character looks like an abstract of something – three flowers? – growing under a factory shed (厂, or chang3) that has a chimney to let out moisture and circulate air. Three flowers SHOULD grow in the shed.  Gai1 is just a mess – we have the “word” radical on the left (讠), and the phonetic “hai1” on the right (亥) which we also see elsewhere in the word for kids

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				or “hai3zi” (孩). Since it won’t help to describe this symbol as derived from “twelfth and last in the cycle of animals, or boar”, once again we leave the job of creating a story to the student.
总是	zong3shi4	Total Is	always	Zong3 (总) as a simplified character looks like two ears or horns on top of a face on top of the heart radical. Its traditional form is far more complex, and so again we will ignore the historical derivation. Envision instead a bison – two horns, big face, and body (with a big heart) – that was ALWAYS present on the Great Plains of American. At least until they weren’t. But they are back. And you can eat them at Ted’s. Shi4 in this case is the very important and perhaps number 2 frequency word after “de” (的) – the word IS. Learn it. The final chapter, extra words, gives a derivation for this character’s form.
从来不	cong2lai2 bu4	At all times NOT	never	The cong2 character, from, is made of two people, one following the other, walking FROM their village. Lai2 for COME is defined in set 6, and bu4 for NOT is defined in set 5. “从来” represents the adverbial “at all times, <i>always</i> ”, so the <i>NOT</i> of that is never.
有时候	you3shi2 hou	Have (at) times	sometimes	You3 for have is defined below (in this set). Shi2hou is again “time” as defined in set 9. Taken together they convey “have, at times” in the sense of “sometimes”.
等	deng3		wait	The bamboo radical over a character that is itself “earth” (土) over “inch” (寸). We saw inch as a component of shirt in set 3; and earth as part of potato in set 2. We also saw the bamboo radical over (筷) in kuai3zi or “chopsticks” in set 5 and xiao3 or “laugh” in set 6. Since earth over inch gives us “si4” or temple (寺), we can think of patient monks waiting and praying all day at the temple (made of bamboo).
有	you3	have	have	Have is symbolized here as the combination of “right side” (右 means right, and it borrows the crossing lines) and moon (or flesh) which is (月). So to be on the “ <i>right</i> side” of the “ <i>moon</i> ” is to be in favor with the gods – and HAVE good fortune, and hence many things.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
一点	yi1dian1	One dot	A little	The component (占) occurs in the characters for store and stand (店 and 站) – dian4 and zhan4. Think of it as a pot with a vented lid on it – in this case, sitting on a fire. The “dots” are the droplets of hot soup that come out of the vent.
帮助	bang1zhu4		help	Bang1 means help; the bottom component (巾) is jin1 or cloth (see <i>scarf</i> in set 3). Zhu4 is made from qie3 (且) and li4 for strength (力) and also means “help”. Remember one component on each side – cloth, power – to recognize this word.
可以	ke3yi3	May using	Can / may	Ke3 contains kou3 (口) and is part of the words for “maybe” (ke3neng2) and “but” (ke3shi4). Yi3 is a small and important character with many uses: in the words for after (yi3hou4), therefore (suo3yi3), as well as (yi3ji2), before (yi3qian2), think incorrectly (yi3wei2). So if you are not allowed to speak – bu4ke3yi3 (不可以); if you don’t know how to speak Chinese – bu4 hui4shuo1 guo2yu3(不会说国语).
会	hui4	Be able, or meet	Be able	This character (会) can represent “be able”, as in a person (人) who can ride the clouds (云). Or it can be “meet” – as clouds might meet under a roof. Hence we have a roof, or a person, over (云) or yun2, clouds. This Character is ALSO “meet”, also hui4, in set 16.
给	gei3	Give	give	This character combines silk (纟) and close or shut (合), he2. Once someone GIVES you money, you <i>close</i> it into your <i>silk</i> purse.
钱	qian2	money	money	Qian2 is made of (钅) on the left, the compressed form of jin1 (金) or gold, common component for sounds like jian1 – “戈” which is symbolic of two “daggers” (戈). The character reflects that the ancients might use <i>two daggers</i> (or guards with knives) to guard their <i>GOLD</i> – or money.



谁	who		从来 不	never	
为什么	why		有	have	
可以	can		会	be able	
帮助	help		钱	money	
给	give		总是	always	
什么	what		应该	should	
什么时候	when		有时候	some times	
等	wait		因为	because	
哪里	where		一点	a little	



## 9. Set 9 – “Shop Etc”



















This set contains a variety of words that can be useful when shopping: talking about it, doing it or thinking about it. We will start to see more and more connections between the 288 words and hundreds of characters used in this set.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
买	mai3	Buy	buy	The traditional character is more like a “net” over “money”, but has evolved, then been simplified, so now it is just a horizontal stroke with hook (fragment for ‘bent’, sometimes zhe2) over “head” (头) or tou2 (see set 13 also). I remember the “net” (to catch money) as “drooping” like a volleyball net, giving the character the third “falling-rising” tone.
卖	mai4	Sell	Sell	Now we have (十) over the character for “buy” (买) – so remember that selling is “ten times harder” than buying. Historically there was a full “出” on top (for go-out, set 6), to show selling rather than buying (taking goods IN), but it was simplified to (土) and then finally to (十). Note only tone distinguishes it from BUY (3 <sup>rd</sup> vs. 4 <sup>th</sup> ).
东西	dong1xi	East-west	Thing	East and west are important characters by themselves, often used to signify things from “oriental” and “occidental”, or of the far east or “the west” (western civilization). East looks like a combination of “che1” for vehicle and “jing1” for capital (车 and 京); west looks a little like “jiu3” or (酒) for alcoholic drink. Some see the sun shining over the horizon above a tree (hence in the EAST); and for WEST, a bird sitting on a nest (since birds go to roost when the sun sets). Shen2me dong1xi is “what thing” or “something”.
这	zhe4	This	This	Combines (文) and (辶) - wen2 (language or literature) and chuo4 (go). Focus on the “crossed strokes” for indicating “THIS”.
那	na4	That	That	Very high frequency word in spoken language. Often in “na4 ge ...” or “that (thing)...”. Also a component of “na3” in “na3r” or (哪儿) – where? - an alternative to “na3li”, also “where”, in set 8. But the left hand side is NOT yue3 (月) (the horizontal lines extend further to the left) – but close!!

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
这些	zhe4xie1	This (plural)	these	Xie (些) can mean “some”, so zhe4xie is a frequent form for indicating “these”. The xie1 character is composed of (此) for ci3, meaning “this” (part of ru2ci3 for “like this”, for example) and (二) for “two”, as in “multiple this”- “these”.
都	dou1	All	all	The components are zhe3 (者) and (阝) fu4 – usually meaning “one who...” and “city” (or hill) respectively. Somehow this is thought to convey the authority of the capital city over ALL peoples. High frequency word.
每	mei3	Every	every	Recognize the component (母) or mu3, for “mother”; plus the top piece of two strokes. With a water radical in front, it becomes (海) or hai3 for ocean or sea– as in Shanghai (上海).
多少	duo1shao	Many few	How much	Each character is a high frequency word in it’s own right: many (多) and few (少). “Many” is indicated by “something doubled” – in this case, the evening moon. “Few” is indicated by “small” (小) with an elongated “drop” or dot-stroke – just as “big” (大) is made into the adverb “too” (太) with the addition of an extra stroke. So “many/few” is a way of asking “how many”. Note also: “little/big” (大小) means “size”.
男人	nan2ren2	Male person	man	The symbol for a male, nan2, is composed of “field” (田) and “power” (or strength) (力); men work in the fields.
女人	nv3ren2	Female person	woman	A stick figure “woman”, distinguished from (人) or generic “person” by the substantial body portion, symbolic of child bearing capacity. Note the pinyin here – a vee (“V”) – indicating a “u” sound with umlaut (or curled tongue). That is, instead of ü, we use “V” which can be combined with tone marks with less complication.
孩子	hai2zi	Child (noun marker)	kids	The hai2 character is composed of the (子) zi3 or child character combined with (亥) – the last of the twelve heavenly branches (and a symbolic drawing of a boar). Also used in xiao3hai2’r (小孩儿) for “little one” / small child.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
开门	kai1men2	Open door	open	Start the day, turn on, begin. See (开) kai1 in “enter” (set 6) and “drive” (set 7). The “two hands reaching up to open the door by removing the bolt across it” discussed by some scholars is unconvincing; an archer about to shoot an arrow works better for me. The use of (门) for door is more idiographic. The men2 character used to make the words “I” and “you” plural is (们) – this one with a person radical to the left – a person standing by the door.
关门	guan1men2	Close door	Close	Close up shop. Turn off. Shut off. Guan1 means “close”. Best to think of this character as fundamental, made up of (two horns) and (天), the former being a variant of (八) or “eight” and the later meaning sky or heaven. Mnemonic: on the eight day, after creating the world and everything therein, it’s maker “rested” – or CLOSED up shop.
点钟	dian3zhong1	Dots (on) clock	Time o’clock	Dian3 means “dots” and zhong1 means “clock”. So <b>4 dots on the clock</b> = four “o’clock”. Dian3 is a frequent character, made from (占) and the ‘four dots’ form of the fire radical. Think of this as a pot over a fire – throwing off “dots” of hot liquid. (Note: “a little bit” is said yi1 dian3 dian3, or 一点点.) Zhong1 here has a squished form of the gold or metal radical on the left (钅) and (中) or zhong1 (center) on the right. 钟 is a simplified form of words for bell and clock. Remember the phonetic “zhong1” (as in the “middle kingdom”, or 中国 – aka China).
时间	shi2jian1	Time Space-between	Time (duration)	This shi2 form of time – made from (日) and (寸) – connotes duration by showing “days” measured in “inches”. Jian1 here represents “room” (you can see through a 门 or doorway to the window 日 the inside) – or the “room between” things, the “gap”. Hence both characters suggest “duration”.
时候	Shi2hou	Time	Time (point in time)	This form of “time” is often used (see “when” in set 8). On the second character, think of the top, backward pointing gizmo as the “hat” on the (矢) character (shi3, means arrow or spear, but looks like a person) with a periscope, allowing him to look “backward”. But the “hou4” I usually think of

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				is (后) when I hear this word is the sound used in “at the back” (hou4mian) or “afterward” (yi3hou4). Replace the “animal” radical with the “person” radical in front of this time related “hou” and you get the hou2 in “monkey” – houzi or (猴子)!
大小	da4xiao3	Big small	Size	As with “dou1shao3” (many+few=how many) da1xiao3 (big+small=size).

都	all		卖	sell	
买	buy		大小	size	
关门	close		东西	some-thing	
每	every		那	that	
多少	how much		这些	these	
孩子	kids		这	this	
男人	man		时候	time	
女人	woman		点钟	time (o'clock)	
开门	open		时间	time duration	

## 10. Set 10 – “Cooking”

The words in this set pertain to cooking and more basic food, particularly food items used in cooking.

Some highlights:

- Note the similarities in form between goose, chicken and duck: 鹅, 鸡 and 鸭.
- Note many cooking words and characters start with the fire (火) radical, huo3 -- and the remaining part of a character will usually contribute to or suggest it's sound.
- Note soup, scalding hot and sugar are all “tang” – with different tones.
- The names of Chinese dishes often include a character about the preparation: see set 12.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
炒	chao3	Fry	fry	Made from the components “fire” (火) indicating a cooking word and “few” (少), suggesting to put on a hot fire for a few minutes: stir-fry. Fried rice: 炒饭 or chao3fan4.
烩	hui4	Braise	braise	Made from the components “fire” (火) indicating a cooking word and “hui4” – which we have seen in sets 8 (be able) and set 16 (meet). Here we can think of heating many wet and dry ingredients together – hence they “meet” in the pot for an extended period.
煮	zhu3	Boil	boil	Again we have the component zhe3, or “one who” (者) [as we saw in 都 in set 9 for “all”] and the component “four dots of fire” along the bottom. Visualize a two layer pot with fire on the bottom and a removable top – like a “double BOILER”.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
烧	shao1	roast	roast	Made from the components “fire” (火) indicating a cooking word and (yao2) or 尧, usually referring to a famous historical emperor (or his wisdom, etc). Probably used here for phonetic reasons – to suggest the sound.
肉	rou4	Meat	meat	This is often called a “picture of meat”. It can mean “meat” from animals, or even the “meat” (pulp) of a fruit or melon. Characters related to meat often contain (月) as a component (hence the references to “flesh” or “moon” symbol in these notes.) In China, generic “meat” is pork; in the US, it usually means “beef”.
猪肉	zhu1rou4	Pig meat	pork	Often used in a context where you need to be specific that you mean “pork”, which is often assumed. Again we have the zhe3 component (者) – this time with a phonetic contribution - with an animal (quan3) radical (豕).
牛肉	niu2rou4	Cow meat	beef	The figure of (牛) evolved from a schematic of a cow. It seems to have lost one horn, and the left one is drooping, but ... that is what the scholars say. Looks a bit like Nian2 or “year” (年).
鸡	ji1	chicken	chicken	The left hand side is you4 (又) – meaning “again”. The right side is niao3 (鸟) for “bird” (occurs in duck and goose too, below). Don’t confuse niao3 with ma3 (马) which is horse or wu1 (乌) which is crow!
鱼	yu2	fish	fish	This character is a picture of what it represents – a fish. The top strokes represent the head, (田) is the body, above

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				— for tail.
羊	yang2	sheep	sheep	This character is a diagram of a sheep's head or face – horns on top, nose at bottom.
豆腐	dou4fu	Bean Rotten	tofu	The dou4 character represents a dish for food. The fu3 character means rotten, and has components fu3 (府) over rou4 (肉). This fu3 is made from guang3 (广) for wide or building and fu4 (付) for pay. And this fu4 is made from ren2 or person (人) and inch (寸). I suggest you look for the “bean” character followed by a complex character with a 广 over the above collection, keying on 肉 at the bottom.
鸭子	ya1zi	Duck (noun indicator)	duck	The first character has a left hand side of 甲 jia3 contributes sound, and the right side “niao3” gives us the “bird” family indication. I remember duck has having the 甲 or "lollipop" left hand side.
鹅	e2	Me-bird: goose	goose	The left side of this character is wo3 (我) for I or me – a very important word. So the “me-bird” character means “goose”. Note that e2 (rising tone) means goose; e4 – falling tone, as in (饿), means “hungry”.
汤	tang1	Soup	soup	This word for soup or hot liquid has a water radical on the left and right side is a common character component contributing sound – usually yang2 or similar.



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
水饺	shui3jiao3	Water dumpling (e.g. boiled)	dumpling	Shui3 is water – as seen in set 12 (ice water) and set 15 (water), from a drawing of flowing water. The Jiao3 character is dumpling – the left side indicating “food” and the right side (交) the word for intersection (many ingredients come together in a dumpling). Note also that shui4jiao4 in set 7 (different tones and characters) means ‘sleep’.
甜	tian2	Tongue-sugarcane: Sweet	sweet	The left side is “tongue” (she2) formed by a picture of a tongue (舌) sticking out of a mouth (口). The right hand side is a gan1 or sweet (甘) – said to be a picture of a mouth with something in it. I see a horse face – long mouth – with ears above it. Horses love sweet apples!
烫	tang4	Hot-soup-over-fire: Scalding	scalding	This character is tang1 (汤) or hot soup over a fire (火). Hence, “scalding hot”! 4 <sup>th</sup> tone seems a natural here, as exclamations are often sounded with falling tones.
糖	tang2	Sugar	sugar	This character combines mi3 (米) for rice with tang2 (唐) as in Tang2 Dynasty (surname, derived from symbols for “pounding rice” and “mount”). I think of the “space age” orange drink “tang”, which is essentially orange flavored SUGAR powder.

beef		牛肉	meat		肉
boil		煮	pork		猪肉
braise		烩	roast		烤
chicken		鸡	scalding		烫
duck		鸭子	sheep		羊
dumpling		水饺	soup		汤
fish		鱼	sugar		糖
fry		炒	sweet		甜
goose		鹅	tofu		豆腐

## 11. Set 11 – “Eat Out”

Some words for eating out, albeit from a somewhat Western perspective: butter, ice, fork, knife, and spoon are not important words for most Chinese. Large cup, very large cup and chicken wrap reflect visits to Starbucks (星巴克, xing1ba1ke4) in China. Other words – Ji1Dan4 for “chicken egg” reflect life in China -- that Chinese eat many kinds of eggs – duck and chicken being the most common. But don’t assume “dan” or egg refers to an egg from a chicken; just as “rou4” or meat is probably not beef.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
牛奶	niu2nai3	Cow milk	milk	First character, niu2, is cow (set 10, beef). Nai3 is “milk” (or breast). The left side of nai3 is “nv3” or woman; the right side contributes sound. Visualize it as a milk container.
酸奶	suan1nai3	Sour milk	yogurt	Suan1 means “sour” and is composed of (酉) and an old character for “walk slowly” which contributes sound. Since the left side of suan1 looks like jiu3 (酒) and right side looks like a vertically oriented rotting fish, I think of it as milk spoiled by alcohol.
黄油	huang2you2	Yellow oil	butter	Each character is a word [set 4, set 15]. Together the meaning of butter is clear.
脱脂	tuo1zhi1	Remove fat	skim	Tuo1 means take off and contains ‘flesh’ (月) or moon and dui4 or joy (兑). Zhi1 also contains ‘flesh’ and (旨) for phonetic contribution, means oil or grease.
咖啡	ka1fei1	Sound words	coffee	Loan word. Ka1 contains mouth and (加) which means “add” but contributes the sound. This fei1 is only really used for “coffee” or “café” loan words – it is “mouth” plus (非), a word meaning “not” and usually appearing in “unusually” (fei1chang2).

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
冰	bing1	Ice	ice	Two dot water radical next to water (水). Historically from two crystals, lumps of ice.
啤酒	pi2jiu3		beer	Pi2 is composed of “mouth” and 卑, which seems to be composed of bai2(白) on shi2(十) with a pie3 stroke through it (丩) giving pi2 it’s initial sound. The Jiu3(酒) character is important and means alcohol, alcoholic drink, or even, when paired with “store” (dian4 -- 店) can mean restaurant or hotel (酒店) (e.g. places that serve alcohol).
葡萄酒	pu2taojiu3	Grape liquor	wine	Pu2tao means grape; the only other use for this pair of characters is in Pu2tao2ya2 – “Portugal” is 葡萄牙. As this is sound / loan word, with no meaning associated, I try to find to interesting subcomponents to the characters to remember. In this case, notice (葡) in pu2 which is part of pu2fu2, or crawl; and (缶) which is part of tao, and is a kind of jar. Or better still - both characters contain (丩), which has bao3 for sound and both have “grain” radicals, as a plant for making spirits should. Bao-bao spirits = wine.
筷子	kuai4zi	Chopsticks (noun marker)	chopsticks	Kuai4 is made of kuai4 or “fast” (快) with a bamboo radical on top (竹) – eat fast with these bamboo sticks!
蛋糕	dan4gao1	Egg cake	cake	Dan4 means “egg” and is used in many words – food and sometimes otherwise (hui4dan4 refers to a ‘bad egg’ or bad person). Gao1 means cake and is made of rice (米) and gao1 (羔) meaning lamb which just contributes the pronunciation / sound.
鸡蛋	ji1dan4	Chicken egg	egg	See Chicken in set 10; Dan4 has a top and bottom part. Both are obscure, but reflected a combination of reptile and offspring (tiny worm). I see a foot (like the bottom part of walk or foot (走, 足) which is just -- 疋 – stepping on something like a nail through a board (虫). So “Stepping on a nail” = “Egg”.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
鸡肉卷	ji1rou4juan3	Chicken meat wrap	Chicken wrap	The new character here is 'juan3' for "wrap" (some kinds of spring rolls use this terminology). Like (包), the bottom part suggests "wrap"; here the top part is almost "guan3" or (关), hence Juan3.
拿铁	na2tie3	Sound words	latte	Na2 means hold, and is made of shut (he2 - 合) over hand (手). Tie3 is the character for Iron (see "subway" in set 1 – "earth iron"). Good words to know, but only seen at coffee shops that make espresso – and latte.
大杯	da4bei1	Large Cup	Large cup	Da4 is big; bei1 is cup and has two components – wood (木) and not (不). So a "real" cup is porcelain – "not wood".
超大杯	Chao1 da4bei1	Super large cup	Very large cup	Chao1 means "surpass; overtake". Made form zou3 (walk or go) which is (走) and zhao4 for the sound (召). But 召 can mean "summon" – so if you walk to get someone, to summon them, you must 'overtake' them. To "overtake big" is to be "super". Used also in the Chinese words for "super bowl" (as in American Football).
叉子	cha1zi	Fork	fork	The character has roots in the symbols for "hand with a dot", thought to relate to crossing fingers, maybe with a stick in it. So perhaps a picture of a hand with a stick in it to eat with.
勺	shao2	Spoon	spoon	Shao2 is used for ladles and spoons for cooking, as well as eating spoons. It is a picture of a ladle or dipper.
刀	dao1	Knife	knife	Once a picture of a blade or knife.

beer		啤酒	knife		刀
butter		黄油	large cup		大杯
cake		蛋糕	milk		牛奶
chicken wrap		鸡肉卷	skim		脱脂
chop sticks		筷子	spoon		勺子
coffee		咖啡	super large cup		超大杯
egg		鸡蛋	wine		葡萄酒
fork		叉子	yogurt		酸奶
ice		冰	latte		拿铁



## 12. Set 12 – “Dishes”

This set of words includes many that can be used to order Chinese food. Some notes below are followed by a chart with information to help you recognize and remember each particular character and word.

Notes on set 12:

- The word “ma2” in MaPo DouFu is made using the character (麻) for hemp; it shows (广) or guang3 (wide or vast) over two bundles of hemp2 (林) – which by itself is the character lin2 meaning forest, woods or grove (as sen1len2, it is clearly a “forest” or large stand of trees, as you can see many many trees in these characters: (森林). So while (木) is a tree, in ma2 it is used symbolically as bundle of hemp. (林 or lin2 is also a common surname.)
- Continuing with “ma2” for a moment, this character is also used in the expressions “ma2fan” (麻烦) for troublesome (as in “ma2fan ni3” for “could I trouble you...” and “bu4 ma2fan” as in “it’s no trouble”) and “zhi1ma” (芝麻) for sesame.
- Note the words for salt and salty, like the words for sugar and sweet, are unrelated.
- Note also that the names of Chinese dishes are often opaque (e.g. “eight treasures”, “three delights”) or merely hint at the dish by specifying the type of preparation (both in terms of cooking – boil, braise, quick fry, etc, and in terms of direct preparation of one or more ingredients, as in chop, preserve, dice, cut into strips, flatten, etc.). Knowing basic characters (for vegetable, soup, grains and particular vegetables, meats and foods helps but is not always relevant.
- Jian4kang1 (健康) means healthy, and Jian4 is sometimes used in the names of products promoting health benefits. It comes from the word for “construct”, jian4 (建), with a “standing person” (亻) radical next to it (things that build strong persons). This in turn is comprised of a (聿) yu4 character, for hand holding a pen writing on paper, and the yin3 radical, (辶) for “journey”. (See the first char in “diet coke”).
- Kuai4le (快乐) means “happy”; (fast happy) -- but the le4 character here can also be pronounced yue4 as in (音乐) which is yin1hue4, and means “music”. 乐, and the

character (行) which is xing1 in bicycle or hang2 in bank (yin1hang2 or 银行), are the only two such badly behaved characters covered in this collection.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
盐	yan2	salt	Salt	In yan2 you can see a divining rod (卜) investigating the earth (土) for a salt cake (皿) (as this third component might be described; it is min2 for vessel, not (皿) for xue4 or blood).
咸	xian2	Salty	Salty	Xian2 for salty (like the Ocean in the picture tile) derives from the word “bite” for its flavor enhancing qualities. “Hurt” with “mouth”, where hurt is (戕) (or ‘destroy’, xu1) and mouth is (口).
一碗米饭	yi1wan3 mi3fan4	One bowl cooked rice	Bowl rice	The components of wan3 for bowl include stone (石 or shi2) and (宛) which is wan3 and including for sound (wan3run2 is ‘just like’; wan3ran2 is “as if). The wan3 part of bowl is composed of 宀 over 夕 and 卩. Distinguish this wan3 from (完), also, wan3, which means “complete” or finish. Mi3fan4 or “cooked rice” is defined in set 2.
鲜	xian1	Fresh (fish, sheep)	Fresh	The symbol of fish together with sheep (鱼, 羊), two things traditionally eaten just after slaughter, is used for “fresh” (see set 10).
麻婆豆腐	ma2po2 dou4fu	Ma2Po2 ToFu (stir fried tofu in hot sauce)	mapodofu	A traditional dish, “dou4fu” was defined in set 10. Ma2 (麻) means hemp and is a picture of two bundles of hemp (though you will recognize (木) as tree) under a shelter; po2 means “old lady” and is part of the expression “lao3po2”, a colloquial expression similar to the English “my old lady” for referring to a spouse (see the (女) as the bottom component).
酱爆茄子	jiang4bao4 qie2zi	Sauce explode eggplant	Eggplant in brown sauce	Eggplant (qie2zi) is from set 2. Jiang4 is a frequent food word and means “sauce, paste or jam” – in everything from peanut butter (hua1sheng1jiang4) to soy sauce (set 15). Jiang4 contains (酉) on the bottom, which is



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				part of (酒) jiu3 seen in words for wine and beer (set 11), and in suan1 (sour) as in yogurt (sour milk, also set 11). Bao4 (this character can vary) contains the characters for fire / cooking (火) and a right-hand component for the “bao4” sound.
宫保鸡丁	gong1bao3 ji1ding1	Palace Protect / Treasure Chicken Diced (Spicy diced chicken)	Kung pow chicken	Gong1 for “palace” is (宫). In the traditional form a small stroke connects the boxes, going down to the left. With a roof and two stories, it is a picture of a “palace”. The second character is usually either bao3 (保) for protect or (宝) for treasure. Protect is a picture of a person next to a (modified) baby they are protecting (but note (呆) by itself is dai1 for “stupid / silly” or “stay”). Treasure is “jade” (玉) under a “roof” (宀).
香菜干丝	xiang1cai4 gan1si1	Fragrant vegetable  (cilantro) &  dried strips  (of Tofu)	Shredded tofu with cilantro	Xiang1cai4 for cilantro is from set 2; Gan1Si1 (干丝) is shredded, pressed beancurd (Tofu or Dou4fu). Gan1 (干) is a both the stative verb “dry” and also means “have to do with”. Casually “ni3 gan4ma2” (你干吗) means “what are you up to?” Si1, silk or thread (丝) is often used in food words for shredded things.
冰水	bing1shui3	Ice water	Iced water	Ice from set 11; water from set 15. Both contain Shui3 (水) for ‘water’.
健怡可乐	jian4yi2 ke3le4	Sound words: healthy-happy Cola	Diet coke	Made up word – Jian4 from “healthy” (jian4kang1, 健康) (see discussion above) and yi2 (怡) from “happy or pleased”, followed by “ke3le4” which can mean “amusing”. Ke3 is from “can” in set 8; le4, from happy (kuai4le), is discussed above.
烤鸭	kao3ya1	Roast Duck	Roast duck	Ya1 for duck is from set 10; Kao3 starts with fire (火) to indicate cooking method, then has (考) which gives the kao3 sound (but means to give / take an examination; the primary College Entrance Exam in China is the “gao1kao3”, or “High Test”. Gao1 from set 4. Notice Kao3 (exam, ) includes the top part of (老) meaning old (lao3) – as it was the elders duty was to give exams to the young students. Kao3 is “roast”.
包子	bao1zi	Buns (noun suffix)	Steamed buns	Bao1 comes from bao1 (万) for wrap and si4 (巳) as a fetus. A very old word for steamed bun

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				with filling.
素烧鹅	su4shao1e2	Veggie roasted duck	Vegetarian goose	Shao1 is a cooking method like kao3 (烤); e2 for goose is from set 10. Su4 can mean plain, white or vegetarian, and is made from a top component which represents mulberry branches (where wild silk cocoons can be gathered) and a bottom component (糸), the “twisted silk” radical (seen in “purple” in set 4). In this case, and with other foods, su4 (素) indicates ‘vegetarian’. A layered, cooked tofu preparation.
馄饨	hun2tun	Traditional ☺	Wanton soup	Both characters have a “food” radical (饣), which is a compressed form of (食), a word for food (shi4). Otherwise these characters together mean “pork dumplings in soup”, but have evolved beyond recognition from their starting points.
蔬菜水饺	shu1cai4 shui3jiao3	Vegetable water-(boiled)-dumplings	Vegetarian dumpling	Shu1cai4 – means vegetables, or “green vegetables”. Both characters have a grass radical (艹) on top - from the word cao4 for grass (草). Cai4 is seen many times in set 2. Shui3jiao3 for dumplings is from set 10.
糖醋里几	tang2cu4 li3ji1	Sugar vinegar here How-many?	Sweet sour pieces	Sugar – set 10; vinegar – set 15. Together is what we call “sweet and sour”. The use of Li3 (li3mian4 or 里面 means “inside”) and ji1 (meaning several or “how many”) is somewhat obscure in this context.
红烧肉	hong2shao1 rou4	Red braised meat	Braised pork	Red (set 4) and meat (set 10) are basic characters; Shao1 with its left side fire radical is another cooking verb.
羊肉串	Yang2rou4 chuan4	Lamb meat skewers	Lamb kabob	Lamb and meat are from set 10; chuan4 is a picture of “strung together”. Chuan4 – meals on a stick of various kinds – are a popular “street food” in China. Chuan4 is delightfully visual!

bowl of rice		一碗饭 一米饭	salt		盐
braised beef		红烧肉	salty		咸
diet coke		健怡 可乐	shredded tofu cilantro		香菜 干丝
eggplant in brown sauce		酱鲍子 茄	steam- ed bun		包子
fresh		鲜	sweet & sour pieces		糖醋 里几
ice water		冰水	veggie dumplings		蔬菜 水饺
lamb kabob		羊肉 串	wanton soup		馄饨
mapo dofu		麻婆 豆腐	kung pao chicken		宫保 鸡丁
roast duck		烤鸭	veggie goose		素烧 鹅

### 13. Set 13 – “Body Words”

This set includes many basic words for body parts. We include “mobile phone” here because a) it is literally “hand machine”, and b) it is practically part of the body these days.

Some additional notes:

- Many characters contain the component (月), which as a character means “moon” but as a component refers to “flesh” or part of the body (in part due to its resemblance to rou4 (肉) (meat).
- Hand, or shou3 (手) and as a radical on the left side of characters (扌) is a high frequency character / symbol. Example: ba3wo4, or grasp: 把握
- Tou2 or head (头) is used twice here, and in other characters (buy, sell, read) and words (mountain top, turn around, bone).

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
脸	lian3	Face	face	Left side ‘flesh’ radical, right side is qian1 (仝) which scholars say is “phonetic” but which also evolved from something that looked a bit like a ‘face’. This Qian1 means “together”.
眼睛	yan3jing	eyes	eyes	Note both characters use the “mu4” or eyes (目) on the left. Yan3 has gen3 (艮) on the right side, which is also part of (跟), means “with” and is pronounced gen1. Jing has qing1 (青) on the right side, which refers to a natural green color, but is used for it’s sound. It reminds me of the more frequent “qing3”, or please: 请.
嘴	zui3	mouth	mouth	We have mouth or kou3 (口), this or ci3 (此) and horn or jiao3 (角). Seems a lot of fuss for what

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				might have been “kou3” (Perhaps combine 月 and 口)?
鼻子	bi2zi	Nose (noun suffix)	nose	We have “self” (自), pointing at the nose between the “eyes”, over bi4 (鼻) which means “to present, give” and is for sound. The zi noun marker is used often, if inconsistently, for some body parts.
头发	tou2fa	Head hair (or emit)	hair	Fa1 here means ‘hair’ but also means ‘emit, or send out’. Fa1zi4 (发自) is sometimes used in email where we see “from” in English. Tou2 (头) is described as a stick figure (aka da4, or 大) with two dots for eyes (but why on one side?) Fa1 can be visualized as an archer, kneeling and aiming to the right. Fa1’s origins are confused by a melding of different traditional characters (as is often the case) into one simplified character.
耳朵	er3dou	ear	ears	Er3 is a picture of an ear; <b>dou</b> shows a tree (木) under branches hanging down – and other scholars say it is twigs and branches together. Duo3 is otherwise used for clouds and flowers -- “etc”.
手	shou3	Hand	hands	Pictograph of a “hand” as indicated in the introduction to this section. Historically had five fingers and looked more like a ‘hand’.
脚	jiao3	Foot (from flesh-flee-authority)	foot	Combination of flesh (月), go or qu4 (去) and a radical meaning “seal” (冫), the later is a picture of a person kneeling – a symbol of authority. So, the FLESH you GO on to flee AUTHORITY – is your foot!

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
肚子	du4zi	Stomach (noun suffix)	stomach	Made from flesh (月) and earth (tu2) (土) (partly for sound?), think “mound of earth” which would represent where your belly is.
背	bei4	back	back	Bei3 or North (北) is on top, showing two people back-to-back. The ‘flesh’ on the bottom signals ‘body part’. (Beijing: 北京 is North Capital).
头	tou2	Head	head	A stick figure -- with two eyes on the top left. Or hair flowing behind?
胳膊	ge1bei	Arm	arm	Ge1 (胳) combines ‘flesh’ with ge4 meaning ‘each’ (各). Bei character combines flesh with bi4 (monarch) for sound (辟). This bi4 has components (shi1), 口 (kou3) and 辛 (xin1).
屁股	pi4gu	Buttocks	butt	Pi4 includes shi1 for body (尸) and bi3 (比) for it’s sound (it means ‘compare’) – but is a schematic of a person sitting as on a bench. By itself, Pi4 means both ‘flatulence’ and nonsense. Gu3 (股) means thigh or section, and is composed of flesh and shu1 (受) which means “beat”. So all together – thigh, buttocks – are flesh that is “beaten”.
手指	shou3zhi3	Hand finger	finger	Shou3 is hand; zhi3 has the hand radical (扌) and includes zhi3 for sound (旨) – which has a spoon (bi3, 匕) over the sun (ri4, 日). Let the hook on the top right remind you of a crooked finger.
脚趾	jiao3zhi3	Foot toe	toe	Although zhi3 here sounds like the zhi3 in finger, they are different characters. This zhi3 has no hand radical, but is made from zu2 (足) which also means foot, and ting4 or stop (止). Mnemonic: ‘toes help you to stop with your feet’. (Jiao3 is foot.)

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
身体	shen1ti3	Body body	Body or "health"	Scholars say the left character is a pregnant woman; can mean life or incarnation too. Ti3 is ren2 ( 人 ) or person and ben3 (本) means basis or origin (or volume of a book). The phrase "the origin of a person's health starts from pregnancy" gets all these thoughts and meanings together.
眼镜	yan3jing4	Glasses	glasses	Yan3 is the same character as used in eyes (眼). Jing4 (镜) means mirror or glass, and has a left hand radical of Jin1 (metal) and a right hand side of jing4 or finish (竟). Jing4, finish, is composed of yin1 or sound (音) over "er2" (child), as (儿) but a variation of person (人). Diving down through yin1 or sound to stand (立) and re4 for sun (日) is probably overkill – yin1 as part of music (yin1yue4), pronunciation (fa1yin1) and news (yin1xin4) – is worth learning in it's own right. But when you see 眼 not followed by a character with an eye left-side radical, look for "metal" and "music" and you will know you are looking at <i>glasses</i> .
手机	shou3ji1	Hand machine	Mobile phone	This is "hand machine" just as we saw airplane was "flying machine" in set 1. Ji1 as before is composed of "tree" or wood on the left and "ji3" for "how many" (or small table) on the right. Cell Phone, Hand machine – same thing.



arm		胳膊	glasses		眼镜
back		背	hair		头发
body		身体	hand		手
butt		屁股	head		头
ear		耳朵	mobile phone		手机
eyes		眼睛	mouth		嘴
face		脸	nose		鼻子
finger		手指	stomach		肚子
foot		脚	toe		脚趾



## 14. Set 14 – “Home + Family”

The words in this set relate to family and home. This gives a small flavor of the complexity and variety of words used to describe relatives in China. Some useful tidbits related to family / home words are presented below, before the set of 18 words are presented in detail.











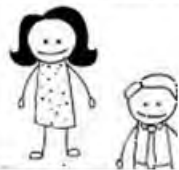

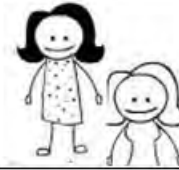
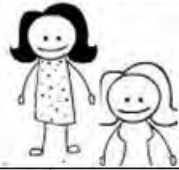

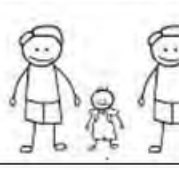
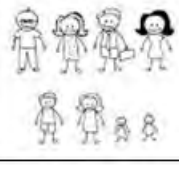
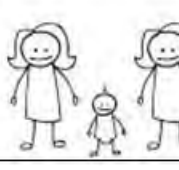
- Jia1 (家) for “home” or “family” starts the ambiguity. Jia1 can refer to the structure itself – your “house”, as in “is your father at home?”. Jia1 can refer to your family unit, however you might define it (ni3 you3 ji1 kou3 ren2 zai4 jia1? You have how many people in your family? Living in your house? ) Sometimes the exact meaning is not clear, but context usually suffices.
- Note different “room” words and where they are used. They include 间, 房, 厅 and 室. Like stream, creek, river, canal, etc., they all connote different ideas and expectations about the “space” they are used for. Pinyin: Jian1, fang2, ting1 and shi4.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
家	jia1	Home or family	home	A home is represented by a roof (宀) over a pig (豕) – a sign of prosperity for any household!
爸爸	ba4ba	Father	father	Fu4 can mean father – as (父); add the ba1 for sound (巴) and you have ba1ba or father. Early versions of ‘father’ had a hand holding a stick. Think of fu4 as crossed swords for defending the family. And the ba1 character could be a smiling “Bar” patron – jiu4ba being one word for “bar”.
妈妈	ma1ma	mother	mother	Ma1 is made from nv3 (女) for woman and gets its sound from the character ma for horse (马).
父母	fu4mu3	parents	parents	One character for father, the other for mother. The mu3 character for “mother” is similar to mv3 (女) with an additional horizontal stroke and an

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				upper and lower dot.
弟弟	di4di	Younger brother	Younger brother	To the western ear, the diminutive sound works for a younger sibling, but otherwise, no good theories exist for the shape of this character. Note it is the right side of the word for ladder we saw in set 1 for “elevator” – electric ladder or dian ti (电梯).
哥哥	ge1ge	Older brother	Older brother	As noted for the word “can” in set 8, this looks like a stacked pair of the ke3 character (可).
姐姐	jie3jie	Older sister	Older sister	The nv3 (女) left side helps designate it a female; the right side qie3 (且) meaning “moreover” isn’t much help, but the stack of boxes, like the stacked symbols in “older brother”, also can suggest “older”.
妹妹	mei4mei	Younger sister	Younger sister	Here the nv3 again identifies the gender as female; and the “mei3” sounds like “beautiful” (but is a different character -- 美) which might otherwise suggest younger sisters are more beautiful. This right hand side character (未) contributes sound – wei4 – but means “have not or did not” (e.g. get married <yet>).
外婆	wai4po2	Outside old lady	Maternal grandma	Wai4 (外) for outside is part of words like <i>foreigner</i> and <i>outside</i> (wai4guo2ren2 and wai4mian). Po2 is like the colloquial “lao3po” for “my old lady” or spouse. Also can be wai4zu3mu3 (外祖母).
外公	wai4gong1	Outside papa	Maternal grandpa	Gong here is the same character as in “public” (see bus in set 1) but is used as in the word Lao3gong for “husband”.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
奶奶	nai3nai	Milk milk	Paternal grandma	This nai3 is for milk or breasts, as seen in “niu2nai3” for milk, in set 11.
爷爷	ye2ye	Grandpa	Paternal grandpa	The ye2 character shows father on top (父) and a variation on jie2 (匚), a person kneeling, on the bottom. The bottom symbol is one of authority, (remember <i>foot</i> ?) so a father’s father authority must be the greatest.
厨房	chu2fang 2	Cooking room	Kitchen	Chu2 shows a room (厂) for preparing dou3 or beans (豆) to specifications – symbolized by cun4 for “inch” (寸). Note beans or Dou4 is the first character in Dou4fu or Tofu (豆腐).
洗手间	xi3shou3 jian1	Wash hands room	Bathroom	Xi3 for wash has a three dot water radical next to xian1 or first – which is the first character of “mister” or xian1sheng (先生). So water on the mister is “wash”. Shou3 is hand from several earlier examples (mobile phone, hand in set 13). Jian1 (间) is a great word to remember for “room” – and you can see a window (日) through the door (门). (Forgive me for suddenly calling our character / radical for <i>sun</i> or <i>day</i> a “window”, but for this one it fits.)
客厅	ke4ting1	Guest room	Living room	Ke4 is guest and refers to each (or ge4, 各) visitor under the roof (宀) of your home. Ting1 refers to a hall or room – remember this for the “shelter part” (厂) and the sound – ting1 from (丁) (which is actually ding1, for diced, as in gong1bao3 ji1ding1 in set 12. )

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
卧室	wo4shi4	Lie-down room	Bedroom	Wo4 means “lie down”; shi4 means room, and shows a roof (宀) over the place where an arrow meets its target (lying up) – zhi4 or (至). This Shi4 or “room” is used in formal addresses.
书房	shu1 fang2	Book room	study	Book is “shu1” (书) as we can also see in the word for library in set 16. It has changed from earlier times too much to see its origin (hand writing in a book). Fang2 can refer to a house or a room and is a very useful word and character – found in fang2jian1 (room) and fang2zi (for structure / house-like building, but not a tall office building). Fang2 comes from hu4 for door (户) combined with fang1 for “square” (方).
孙子	sun1zi	Grand son.	grandson	The left side of sun1 is “child”, as is the second character (zi). The right side of sun1 is “xiao” or little. Hence little son of son.

bed room		卧室	kitchen		厨房
bath room		洗手间	living room		客厅
father		爸爸	mother		妈妈
paternal grand father		爷爷	older brother		哥哥
maternal grand father		外公	older sister		姐姐
paternal grand mother		奶奶	parents		父母
		外婆	study		书房
grand son		孙子	younger brother		弟弟
home		家	younger sister		妹妹

## 15. Set 15 – “Basic Foods 3”

The words in this set are additional common food items. Some notes here as reminders:

- The grass radical often indicates some plant form. So watch for (艹).
- Qing1 (青) for green (of growing things) is used in Qing1nian (growing years, or youth: 青年). In the third (rising-falling) tone, qing3 is “please” or an invitation – note the “word” radical on the side: 请.
- Water, tea, noodles and rice should be mastered early!

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
蘑菇	mo2gu1	Mushroom mushroom	mushroom	Mo2 describes some sort of plant (艹) that grows on or in rocks (石) and trees (木) under a shelter (广) (or across wide areas). Not too difficult for a nineteen stroke beast! Gu1 also is ‘of plants’ (艹) and contains “gu1”, for sound – a word that means “fathers sister” (姑) as you can see from the 女 or nv3 (woman) and gu3 (古, meaning ancient).
胡萝卜	hu2luo2bo	reckless radish	carrot	Hu2 is a common surname, and also means “reckless”. It combines ancient (gu3 or 古) with moon or flesh (月). The next two characters mean “radish” – see below.
洋葱	yan2cong1	Ocean onion	onion	Yan2 (洋) is the three dot water radical next to sheep (羊), yang2. Cong1, which comes from scallion or green onion, has a plant radical on top, a “heart” radical on the

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				bottom (心), and cong1 (匆) for “urgent, rushed) in the middle. A wet sheep has a strong smell, like a yellow or white onion – something even the strong-hearted might hurry away from.
青菜	qing1cai4	Green vegetables	greens	Qing1 (青) is the word for the natural color of green – grass and frogs, for example. The top component is similar to sheng1 (life, or birth as 生), the bottom “flesh” or moon – so the color of growing things somehow came out of this. Cai4 for vegetables is used many times in set 2. Compare to Celery – qin2cai4.
紫薯	zi3shu3	Purple sweet potato	Purple yam	Purple, the only color besides red with a silk radical, was covered in set 4. Shu3 for sweet potato was seen as “hong2shu3” or red (normal) sweet potato in set 2.
萝卜	luo2bo	Radish – or turnip	radish	Lou2 is comprised of the grass radical, signaling a plant (艹), and a net (目 on it’s side) in the evening (夕). (罗) is a “bird net” of sorts, and was chosen for it’s sound.
酱油	jiang4you2	Sauce oil	Soy sauce	Jiang4 as “sauce” was explained in set 12 (Jiang4 contains (酉) on the bottom, or (酒) jiu3 without the water radical); the mnemonic for oil is shown for the word oil below.
面包	mian4bao1	Noodle wrap	bread	Mian4 (面) is used for noodle; think of it as a drawing of lasagna being cut by a special knife. Bao1 is “wrap” as noted in boa1zi (set 12) and was also seen as a character component in sets 11 (wrap) and 6 (run).

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
油	you2	Oil	oil	I see this as “fluid extracted from a field” because of the three-dot water radical, and the field component (田) with a pipe sticking up out of it. The scholarly explanation is that the water radical signals a fluid, and that (由) is a character that sounds like you2.
醋	cu4	Vinegar	vinegar	Again the component (酉), this time on the left. Followed by xi1 (昔) as in “former times, past”. [I see “days” (日) buried in the past – under two “earths” (土).] Cu4 could be “wine” (or jiu4: 酒) from a former time -now turned to <b>vinegar</b> !
面	mian4	Noodle	Noodles	The traditional character had a form of “wheat” in it, but was dropped for simplification, leaving the “mian” the sound from ‘face’. See Mian4Bao3 above.
小麦	xiao3mai4	Little wheat	Wheat	Xiao3 means small as seen in <i>grandson</i> in set 14 and in <i>size</i> and <i>child</i> in set 9. Derived from ‘three small dots’ – or the subdivision of something already small (八). Mai4 here has a common component on the top, signifying grain, and a common component on the bottom, usually associated with “walking slow”. Hence the slow-growing grain – is “wheat”.
粥	zhou1	Porridge	Porridge	Scholars say this is rice (米) mi3, surrounded by Gong1 (弓) for “bow or bend”. I see rice (米) inside of a WEAK (弱) liquid or broth. The extra pair of strokes at the bottom of both sides reflects the paucity of solid content in the porridge. Pronounced like “Joe” – but a



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				cup of this Joe would NOT be coffee.
蒜	Suan4	garlic	garlic	The grass or plant radical over an old word that sounded like suan4 (蒜), now shi4 for show or indicate – doubled. Can garlic help you predict the future?
干酪	gan1lao4	Dry cheese	cheese	Gan1 for dry as in “dried pressed tofu, shredded” in Gan1se1 (干丝) [set 12]. Lao for... cheese. Rare character. NaiLao (奶酪) also cheese.
汁	zhi1	Juice	juice	Three dot water radical followed by ten (十). Juice has ten times the nutrition of water!
水	shu3	Water	water	Three lines showing the flow of water? Drawing the long middle of the river stroke first, followed by the left one bouncing off the center, and the right pair going different directions, you can think of a stream with a small shallow spot in the middle.
茶	cha2	Tea	tea	A very important character – best to see this as a person in a tea-house (with plant radical on top).

bread		面包	porridge		粥
carrot		胡萝卜	purple yam		紫薯
cheese		干酪	radish		萝卜
greens		青菜	soy sauce		酱油
juice		汁	tea		茶
mush-room		蘑菇	vinegar		醋
noodles		面	water		水
oil		油	garlic		蒜
onion		洋葱	wheat		小麦

## 16. Set 16 – “Queries 2”





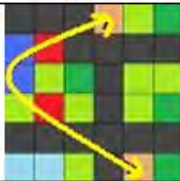













This set includes more useful words for asking and answering questions.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
跳	tiao4	jump	jump	Tiao4 has a compressed “foot” left side and “omen” or back-to-back stick figures on the right. Dance is tiao4wu3, so perhaps the figures are jumping around. Foot – zu2 – is (足).
等	deng3	Wait	wait	The bamboo radical over a character that is itself “earth” (土) over “inch” (寸). We saw inch as a component of shirt in set 3; and earth as part of potato in set 2. We also saw the bamboo radical over (筷) in kuai3zi or “chopsticks” in set 5 and xiao3 or “laugh” in set 6. Since earth over inch gives us “si4” or temple (寺), we can think of patient monks waiting and praying all day at the temple (made of bamboo).
会	hui4	Meet	meet	Clouds (云) gathering under a gently sloping roof, allowing a large gathering.
可能	ke3neng2	Can be able	maybe	Ke3 here is the same as in ke3yi3 (可以) be able. Neng2 has a left side of triangle (almost) over the moon, and right side is a pair of ancient spoons (匕). Can you throw the two spoons into the triangle above the moon? <i>Maybe...</i>
这儿	zhe4	This here	here	Zhe4 followed by the “r” sound. This zhe4 is composed of the “go” radical chuo4 (辶) and wen2 for language or culture (文). A very

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				basic word best simply memorized. Mnemonic: this HERE is the GOTO word.
那儿	nar4	That there	there	This and That (这 and 那) were seen in set 9. Adding the “r” sound to the end changes the word somewhat - signifying location.
远	yuan3	Far	far	The radical “go” looks like a long road (辶), and the component yuan2 (元) contribute sound – but means “primary” – so the primary thing about that long road is the FAR distance it <b>goes</b> .
近	jin4	Near	near	The component Jin1 (斤) means about half a kilogram, and is a unit of measure for many bulk goods. This and the go (chuo4) radical (or ‘road’) signal a short trip, or “near”. Don’t confuse with Jin1 (enter, 进) in set 6.
右	you4	Right	right	Consider the vertical and horizontal strokes as a stick figure striding forward. Kou3 (口) suggests he is speaking righteously, striding forward knowing he is correct or “right”.
左	zuo3	Left	left	Our stick figure is striding forward, and the I-beam reminds us of “work” (工) and that he is with the “workers party” – a party traditionally on the “left”.
直	zhi2	Straight	straight	Think of this as an aiming sight, allowing you to aim your high-speed camera at your selected target, straight ahead.
朋友	peng2 you3	Friend friend	friend	Peng2 shows two “flesh” components together, symbolizing friends spending time with each other. You3 is derived from two hands joined in friendship, but this is no

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				longer visible. Alternately, think of a) that striding stick figure (in left and right), and b) duplicating it “again”, because you4 (又) is the character for “again”.
小朋友	xiao1 peng2you3	Little friend	youngster	We have “little” or xiao1 in set 9, 14 and 15. Peng2you3 is “friend” from this set. <i>Xiao pengyou</i> is a way people frequently address children they do not know in public.
地图	di4tu2	Earth picture	map	Di4 for “earth” is composed of tu3 (土) and ye3 or also (也). This character is used for address - di4zhi3 (地址). Tu2 for “picture” also means diagram, map or plan, so the character shows a surround (口) with winter (冬) inside – a plan for a house to keep winter OUT.
图书馆	tu2shu1 guan3	Picture book building	library	We have seen tu2 for picture (in “map”) and shu1 for book (in “study” or “book room”); now we have “building” or guan3 (馆). Guan3 contains the food radical (饣) as often buildings have places to eat, and guan1 for “official” (官). Guan looks like a building – a couple of sections under a roof. Used in various words – hotel (lv3guan3), tea house (cha2guan3), guest house (bing1guan3), restaurant (cai4guan3), and many more. So picture-book-building = library.
书店	shu1dian4	Book store	bookstore	Book has been in several words (see library above). Dian4 for a “shop” is seen in “shang1dian4” below.
商店	shang1 dian4	Business shop	store	Shang1 (商) is a word for business or merchant; also <i>discuss</i> . Shang1ye4 (商业) is a business person, commerce or trade. Shang1 is often used in business names and places

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
				supporting commerce ( e.g. China Merchants Bank). Dian4 (店) can be seen as a building (广) with some goods inside (占),
洗	xi3	Wash	wash	As described in “wash hands room” or “bathroom” (xi3shou3jian1), this character shows water showering down on a “Mister” (先生).

book store		书店	meet		会
child		小朋友	near		近
far		远	right		右
friend		朋友	jump		跳
here		这儿	store		商店
left		左	straight		直
library		图书馆	there		那儿
map		地图	wait		等
maybe		可能	wash		洗

## 17. Some Additional Characters

Simple sentences using the nouns above as subjects and objects, with verbs and adjectives, and be easily constructed from the words we have. However, this lessons do not contain the simple and most basic words often learning in introductory lessons – the words for “I” and “You”; the simple greeting for “hello”; and verb for “is” or “to be” which is shì (是); or the most frequent character used in the Chinese

language – the particle “de” (的) used, for example to show possession. These important characters are presented below to allow you to express many more ideas and to construct many simple sentences using the word in Wordz Lianxi I that would not otherwise be possible.

Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
我	Wo3	I or Me	I	Hand + dagger or spear for feeding oneself; an expression of identity.
你	Ni3	You (informal)	You	Right side is old “thou” type of formalism.
是	Shi4	Is	Is	Close to (走) for walk in set 6, Shi combines “Sun” (日) on top with a form of “correct” (zheng4) on the bottom (正). The guiding light of the sun tells us what is correct, and provides the basis for all existence. Hence sun+correct tell us, and enable, what IS.
的	De	Possessive Particle	Indicates possession	Most frequent word in Chinese texts. “is this your pen of blue?” not “is this your blue pen?”: required in many places.
名字	Ming2zi	Name Characters	Name	
名片	Ming2pian4	Name Card	Business card	



Hanzi	Pinyin	Char-by-char	English	Notes
吗	Ma	Question Particle	Indicates question	
出租车	Chu1zu1 che1	Go Out-Rent-Car	Taxi	Chu1 and che1 (出, 车) are covered in sets 6 and 1. Zu1 (租), the character for <b>rent</b> combines “grain” (禾) he2 with an abstract word that has a sense of “for now” (且) qie3 – as in “you can borrow my grain for now” (as in a loan to a trader). 且 can be seen in help (帮助) and older sister (姐) -- sets 8 and 14).
我们	Wo3men	I – plural	We	
也	Ye3	Also	Also	
他	Ta1	You (male)	He, him	
她	Ta1	You (female)	She, her	
他们	Ta1men	They	They, them	
你们	Ni3men	You-plural	You (plural)	
也许	Ye3xu3	Also allow	Perhaps	





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