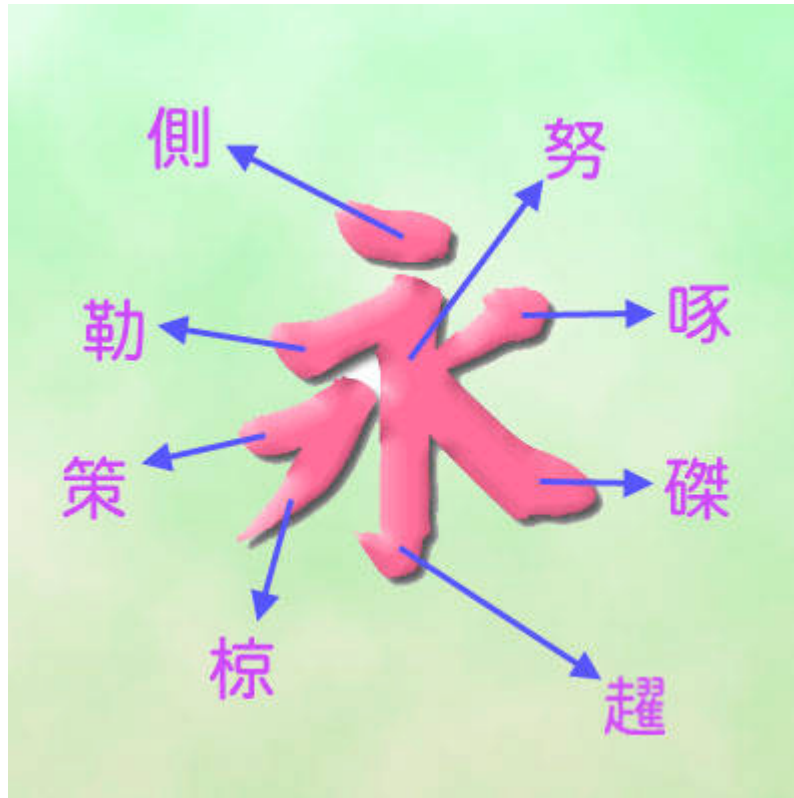


Lesson 2: Strokes

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How to write Chinese Calligraphy - Eight kinds of brush stroke

Although Chinese characters total some fifty thousand, only six to seven thousand are used often. Despite the staggering number, analysis shows no more than eight basic strokes: dot (丶), dash (一), perpendicular downstroke (丨), downstroke to the left, or left-falling stroke (丿), wavelike stroke, or right-falling stroke (㇇), hook (亅), upstroke to the right (㇏), and bend or twist (㇏).

To learn calligraphy, it is vital that you learn to write the eight strokes before you learn to write Chinese characters. The strokes are the basic skill in writing. I shall attempt to explain something about these eight basic strokes, using as model the calligraphy of Liu Gongquan, found on rubbings from the stone tablet entitled Xuan Mi Ta Bei.

Dot

Take the Chinese character fe for example. To make the dot, move the brush slightly to the left (opposite direction) upward. Turn it to the right downward. Pause. Turn the brush slightly downward. Turn

the brush upward. Turn the brush downward again. Slight pause. Now turn to the left and downward, as you end the dot.

There are many ways of writing the dot in Chinese calligraphy. Although the pattern remains the same, the dot assumes many forms. The learner must patiently study the various forms. He should compare the different forms and try to grasp their characteristics, mastering the way to write the dot with a Chinese brush.

Dash



The dash, or horizontal stroke, at the very bottom of the character 人 is a good example. Touch the tip of the brush on the paper and turn it to the opposite direction, the left a bit, as you begin writing. Tip the brush downward. Pause a little. Keep your brush point on the center of the stroke. Turn right. End the stroke. Pause. Turn the brush back to the left (see picture).

Perpendicular downstroke



Take the last perpendicular down-stroke in the character 都 as an example. Begin the stroke by moving the brush to the left. Turn the brush to the right. Pause a little. Pull the zhong feng, or central part of the brush, down. When you are about to end the stroke, lift the brush a bit. When the point has reached the end, lift the brush. End the stroke by leaving a sharp point on the paper (see picture).

Downstroke to the left



Take the left stroke in the character 人 for example. This stroke begins with a left upward stroke. Turn the brush to the right. Downward. Pause a little. Bring the zhong feng to the left downward. Lift the brush from the paper as you end the stroke (see picture).

Wavelike stroke



Take the wavelike stroke in the character 文 for example. Begin the stroke by moving the brush tip to the left upward. Bring the brush to the right and downward. A slight pause. Continue moving the brush to the right. Lift the brush when you end the stroke. It is like a wave, with three bends (see picture).

Hook



The hook may be of several kinds, such as the perpendicular hook in the character 有 or the crooked hook ㇇, in the character 武 or the pao gou in the character 气 or the wan gou in the character 易. The method calls for a pause when the brush curves to make the hook. Turn the brush around, then make the curve (see picture).

Upstroke to the right



Take the tick on the left part of the character 括 for example. Begin the tick with the brush moving to the left. Turn the brush downward. Pause. Now upward to the right. When you write the stroke, you must be quick. There must be strength in your stroke (see picture).

Bend or twist



Take the first bend in the character 也 for example. Begin by moving the brush in the opposite direction-left. Turn the brush downward. Pause. The zhong feng, or the central part of the brush point, is to the right, upward. When you come to the bend, press the brush down. Lift the brush to the right slightly. Turn the brush downward. Slowly lift the brush to the left. End the stroke by lifting the brush from the paper (see picture).

This is a general description of the eight basic strokes in the Liu style of calligraphy. To study it in detail, refer to the book about Liu's

calligraphy. Study and copy the strokes carefully.

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