

GETTING STARTED

画

IT IS IMPORTANT FIRST OF all to learn how to hold the brush properly. This will not only enable you to develop a good brush stroke, but it will also allow your energy to flow smoothly onto your painting. This, in turn, gives more vitality to your painting.

The Chinese hold a brush perpendicular to the paper, both for writing characters and also for much of their painting. In *fig 1* you will see that your hand should be just below the center of the handle. The thumb is placed on the left of it, and the index and middle fingers on the right. The brush is then supported by the ring finger, with the little finger pressing against the ring finger.

When you are doing a small painting, you may rest the wrist and the elbow lightly on the table. These then move as the brush strokes are applied. When you are doing a large painting, both wrist and elbow are raised above the paper.

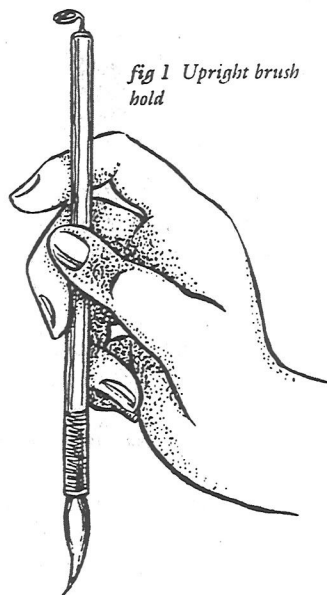


fig 1 Upright brush hold

How to hold the brush for different strokes. In *fig 1*, the brush is held vertically for powerful strokes. In *fig 2*, with the brush at a slant, the side is used to produce wider strokes. The wrist should remain stiff, while the fingers and arm do the movement.

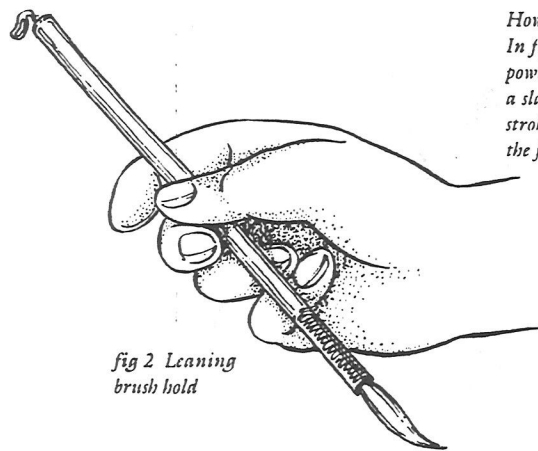


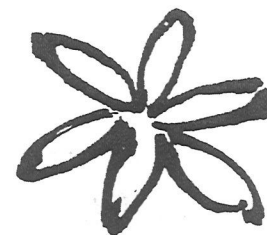
fig 2 Leaning brush hold

Basic Strokes

Once you know how to hold the brush, you can start with the basic brush strokes:

Upright holding brush stroke This is used for defining the outline or for doing dots and flicks.

Here, the petal outlines, branches and nodes are all thin strokes requiring control of the pressure used at the brush tip.

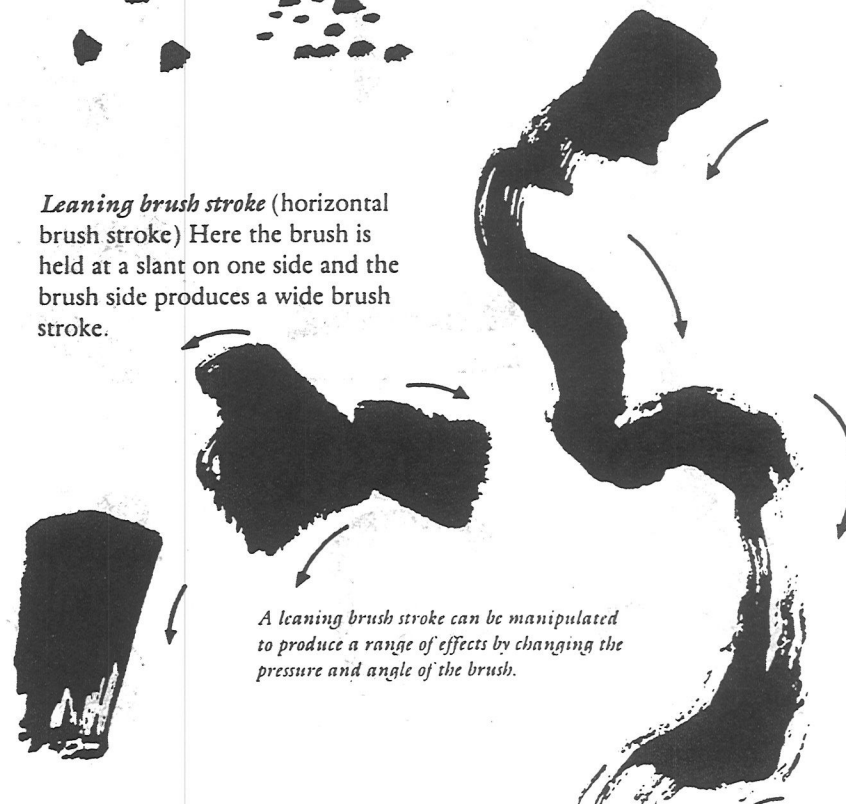


Different-sized dots can be simply achieved by using different pressure of the brush tip.

These bamboo nodes are done with a flick of the brush (see bamboo section, page 16).



Leaning brush stroke (horizontal brush stroke) Here the brush is held at a slant on one side and the brush side produces a wide brush stroke.



A leaning brush stroke can be manipulated to produce a range of effects by changing the pressure and angle of the brush.

CALLIGRAPHY

画

CHINESE PAINTING IS VERY DIFFERENT from any other kind of painting, as the skills it employs have their origins in calligraphy. Together, painting and calligraphy are referred to as the Twin Sisters.

Calligraphy is used on paintings for two reasons. One is to add the painter's signature and date. In addition, painters often add a poem that relates to the subject or feeling of the painting.

Writing Chinese calligraphy may seem like a daunting task, but it is worth persevering.

In learning the strokes of calligraphy, you will have an excellent training exercise for practicing the brush stroke techniques of Chinese brush painting.

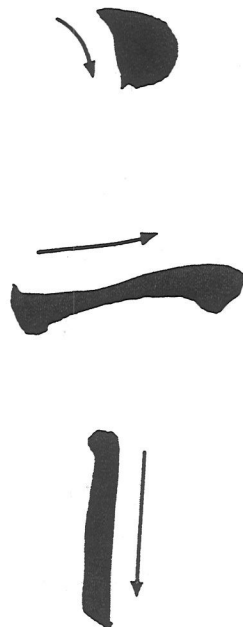
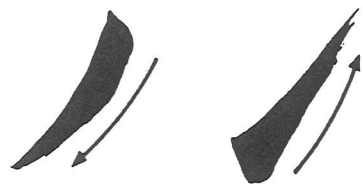
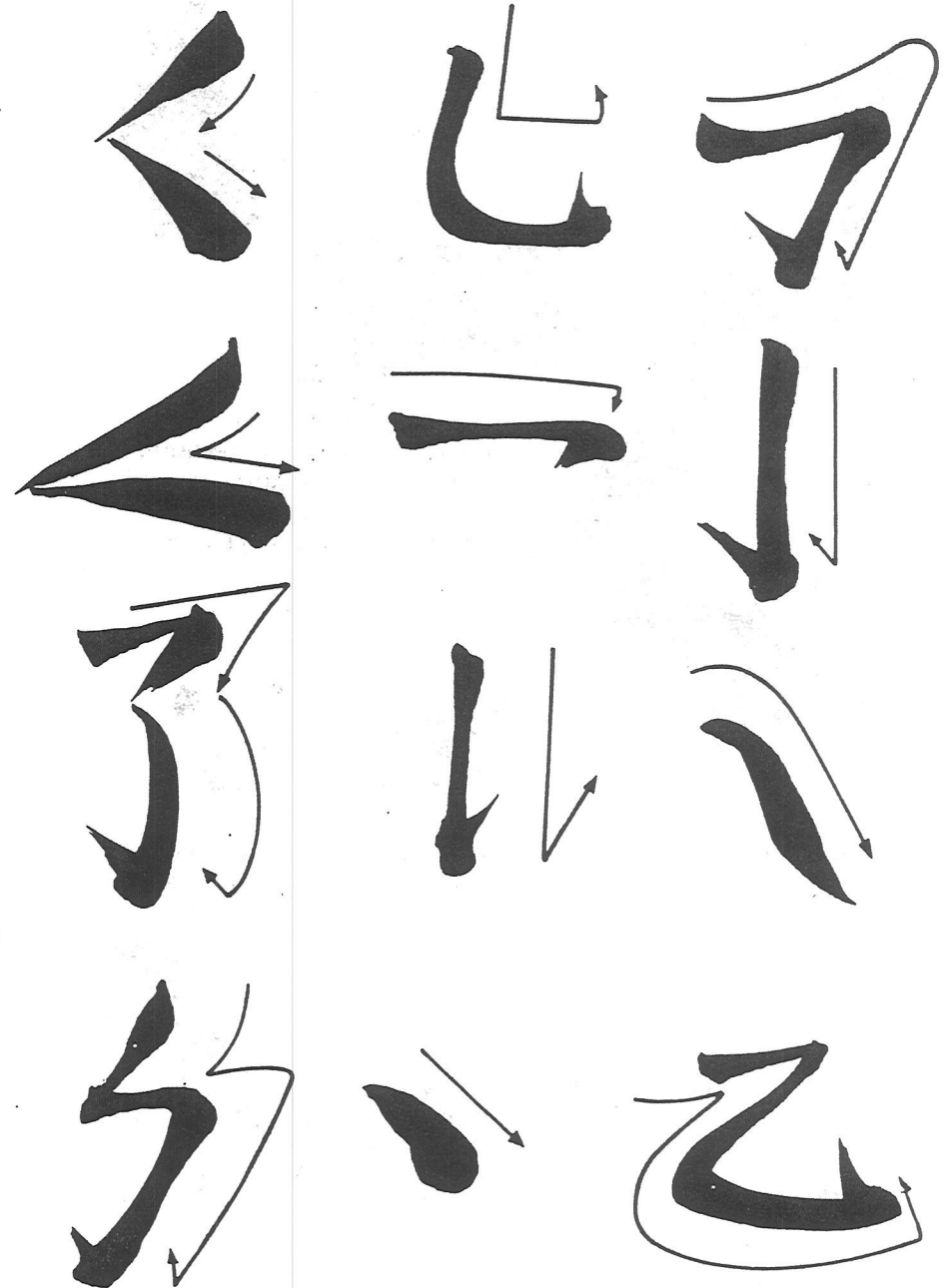
Secondly, you may be able to obtain a Chinese name for yourself from a Chinese-speaking friend. It's quite common for westerners to be given a Chinese name based on the phonetics of their own name. If this is possible for you, you will then have at least three characters to practice so that you can sign your own work!

Basic Strokes

The first thing to remember when doing calligraphy is to grind up your ink to make it sufficiently black.

From the calligraphic point of view, the Chinese characters are all reduced into simple strokes.

There are nine strokes in theory and about seventeen in practice as shown here.



The main calligraphy strokes are shown here. As they are very specific and need to be executed with precision, you should practice them first, before going on to paint characters. The arrows indicate the movement of the brush as the strokes are carried out.

Wolf's or leopard's hair brushes are used for calligraphy and the brush is always held upright. The brush pressure varies depending on which direction the stroke tapers. For each character, there is a particular order by which the strokes are added—i.e. from left to right and from top to bottom. Most strokes include a flick of the brush at the end and this should

THE FAMILIES OF CHARACTERS

PICTOGRAPHS (*Xiàng xíng*)

- a) Rén (*man*)
b) Zhōng (*center*)
c) Shān (*mountain*)

人_a 中_b 山_c

INDICATORS (*Zhǐ shì*)

- a) Sān (*three*)
b) Shàng (*to go out*)
c) Xià (*to go down*)

三_a 上_b 下_c

IDEOGRAMS (*Huì yì*)

- a) Rì (*sun*)
b) Yuè (*moon*)
c) Míng (*brightness*)

日_a 月_b 明_c

PHONOGRAMS (*Xíng shēng*)

- a) Tā (*he*)
b) Tā (*she*)
c) Sōng (*pine*)

他_a 她_b 松_c

DEFLECTIVES (*Zhuǎn zhù*)

- a) Lǎo (*elderly*)
b) Kǎo (*examination*)
c) Wǎng (*to capture*)

老_a 考_b 网_c

LOAN CHARACTERS (*Jiǎ jiè*)

- a) Wàn (*ten thousand*) from "scorpion"
b) Xī (*west*) from "bird in the nest"
c) Lái (*to come*) from "cereal"

萬_a 西_b 來_c

Pictographs (*Xiàng xíng*, images of the object, character-pictures) are stylized representations of the objects they are trying to evoke. *Indicators* (*Zhǐ shì*, indirect symbols) convey abstract ideas by means of signs. They can be formed by adding one or more conventional signs to a pictograph. *Ideograms* (*Huì yì*, associatives, logical composites) are the result of combining one or more pictographs to form characters with different meanings (above: sun + moon = brightness). *Phonograms* (*Xíng shēng*, phonetic determinatives, phonetic aggregates) represent almost 90% of existing characters. They comprise characters formed of two parts, one of which suggests the meaning, while the other determines the pronunciation (above: *tā*, "he," is distinguished by a phonetic sign from *tā*, "she." In example (c), the character of *mù*, "tree," linked to a phonetic sign that establishes the pronunciation, forms the word *sōng*). *Deflectives* (*Zhuǎn zhù*, symbols of reciprocal interpretation) are characters that are interlinked. (The character *kǎo* (b), which means "examination," is thought to derive from *lǎo* (a), "elderly," because according to Confucian logic only elders can examine; in example (c), the character for *wǎng*, "to capture," derives from the one for "net." *Loan characters* (*Jiǎ jiè*, phonetic characters on loan) have no effect on either meaning or pronunciation, deriving solely from often etymologically inexplicable usage, and are the bane of philologists: they generally result from the transference of meaning to a homophone.

THE STROKES THAT FORM THE CHARACTER

Strokes	Names	Examples	Strokes	Names	Examples
1	Dot	不	13	Downstroke to the left with dot	好
2	Horizontal	不	14	Downstroke to the left with fold	去
3	Perpendicular	不	15	Horizontal with downstroke to the left	汉
4	Downstroke to the left	八	16	Perpendicular with turn	忙
5	Downstroke to the right	八	17	Horizontal with fold and hook	习
6	Tick	汉	18	Horizontal with fold and hook (variant)	也
7	Horizontal hook	你	19	Perpendicular with turn and hook	儿
8	Perpendicular hook	小	20	Horizontal with fold and tick	语
9	Oblique hook	我	21	Perpendicular with fold and turn with tick	吗
10	Perpendicular with tick	很	22	Horizontal with fold and turned downstroke to the left	这
11	Perpendicular with fold	口	23	Horizontal with fold and turned hook	那
12	Perpendicular with fold	画	24	Horizontal with fold and turned hook (variant)	九

The strokes are in the left hand column; in the right hand column they are shown as a component of a complete character. The relevant numbers (1-24) are given in red on each page from p.24 to p.247, to denote the strokes employed in writing the radical (from *Elementary Chinese Readers Book One Chinese Character Exercise Book*, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing, 1980).