Chinese Language Flashcards

Information used in creating these flashcards was retrieved from WinFlash Flashcard Library: (http://www.openwindow.com/pages/wfusers.htm). The information was developed and contributed by Richard Harding Gardner. Additional symbols, definitions and tones taken from the Mandarin Tools Online Chinese-English Dictionary (http://www.mandarintools.com/worddict.html). There are 215 basic characters for beginning Chinese language students. The flashcards are color-coded, the simplified characters in pink and the traditional characters in yellow. These Chinese Language Flashcards are copyright protected. You may view, download, and print this material only for your personal, noncommercial use.

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Notes from Richard Harding Gardner

Credits:

I used TwinBridge Chinese system to insert the characters into Microsoft Windows 95 Paint to create the bmp graphic files. The mnemonics and etymology of the characters are taken from Volume 1 of FUN WITH CHINESE CHARACTERS (Federal Publications 1980 - ISBN# 981 01 3004 X). These three volumes published from a series of cartoons first published in the Singapore Strait Times, are a wonderfully light-hearted and charming introduction to Chinese characters and traditions. I recommend them as study aides or gifts.
nǚ
woman; girl; daughter
woman kneeling or striding forward

zǐ
infant, child, son
pictography of arms out-stretched
in swaddling clothes

hǎo
good, excellent, right
woman + child

ān
peace, contentment
woman under your roof
zì
Letter, symbol, character, written word 
books cherished like a child in under your roof

shǐ
Pig, hog swine 
pictography of belly, paws, back and tail

jiā
house, family 
a pig under your roof gave prosperity

jià

jià

to marry a man 
adds home to woman 
an incentive for a woman to marry
妻
Wife
women gets broom on marriage
wields it, taking care of house and home

木
tree / wood

李
plum / plum tree
tree children are fond of
also a Chinese surname

栖
to roost / perch / nest
to live in poverty
to seek refuge
tree + west
rén
man; person; human
pictograph of man astride the world

dà
big; great man with arms outstretched

tiān
heaven; sky; day
big man with head touching the sky, where the dawn comes from...

fū
husband; distinguished person
big man with hairpin qualified as prospective husband and distinguished man
tài
too; over; excessive
big man underscored

li
stand / rise up
legs standing on firm ground

xiǎo
small / petty / young
from division (/ \) of an object (J) making smaller

shǎo
less / few / lack
small cut smaller
jiān
point (of needle); sharp; shrewd; pointed
(ideograph)
small of top of big

tián
rice field / grain field / farm
pictograph of ploughed field

lì
strength / force / power
pictograph of a clenched forearm

nán
man / male / masculine
a field where strength is exerted
rì
sun / day
formerly circle with rays, now squared off

yuè
moon / month
pictograph of old moon waning

míng
brilliant / bright / enlightened
the sun and the moon! = brilliant Ming Dynasty

bái
white; snowy; empty; blank;
bright; clear; plain; pure;
gratuitous
first ray of sun over the horizon
dàn
dawn / day-break / day
appearance of sun over the horizon

jīng
crystal / brilliant / sparkling
three suns into crystallized pattern

jiā
1st heavenly stem; 1st in order; armor;
from + (ten) in square, clarified by line extended, similar to "helmet" thus any kind of protective cover

zǎo
early / morning
sun at height of man's helmet also "first" thus first sun or early morning
xiū
rest / cease
man resting against a tree

xiī
West
bird roosting in nest
(combination east+west = all things)

dōng
East
sun peeping thru tree

shàng
up / above / ascend
pictograph

上
xia
down / below / descend
pictograph (below horizon)

zhong
center / middle / neutral
arrow thru center of target

nu
slave / servant woman under the hand

you
friend
derived from two hands shaking
cōng
haste; hurry; alarm
originally: heart peering thru the lattice of a window
now heart lost in the haste!

wǒ
I / me
hand grasping spear asserting my-ness

qē
spear / lance
pictograph of ancient weapon w/ hook and crossbar

nǐ
you
person + same weight = (male) you
yě
also / in addition to
(joining man to his) drinking horn

tā
he / she
(that) person + also

mù
Eye
squared off pictograph - two eyelids and a pupil

jiàn
to see
originally eye on top of legs
kàn
it depends; think; to see; to look at; hand held up to shield from sun

kǒu
mouth / opening pictograph

yán
to speak; to say; talk; word; many "lines" above mouth

xìn
letter; true; to believe; sign; evidence; man standing by his words man transmit-
gōng
work; worker; skill; profession; trade; craft; labor; pictograph of carpenter's square

zuǒ
Left
Chinese surname
hand which holds the carpenter's square

yòu
Right
hand which feeds mouth

shé
Tongue
tongue sticking out of the mouth
huà

dialect; language; spoken words; speech; talk; words; conversation; what someone said; words (variant sign) + tongue

ěr

Ear
squared off pictograph (with earlobe)

qǔ

to take; to get; to choose; to fetch; hand on ear

qǔ

Take a wife hand on ear over woman
xiōng
elder brother
mouth with legs

bā
Eight (8)
divide / separate - symmetrical symbol - very divisible

duì
exchange or barter, to cash;
originally: derived from elder brother's "breath into words of encouragement" - elder brother dividing things up

shuō
speak; theory; story
words being exchanged (pontificating) "by elder brother"
**shí**
Ten (10)
symbol of completeness
- extent in two dimensions -
joins E,W,N,S and center

**gǔ**
old; ancient
also Chinese surname
ten mouths = tradition

**jì**
reckon; calculate; plan; scheme
sayings + ten implies ability to calculate

**xīn**
Heart, mind
pictograph
nù  
indignant; anger; passion; rage
slave (hand+ woman) bonded to heart

pà  
to be afraid; to fear;
(white heart) variant of heart + white

shēn  
body; torso; person; life; status; pregnancy;
originally: pregnant (pictograph)

zì  
from; self; oneself; since;
nose sticking out of body
chǐ
Teeth
stops (foot) in a man’s mouth = teeth

zhǐ
to halt; stop; stand still
bottom of outstretched foot
(5 toes reduced to 3)

zú
foot; to be sufficient;
man being stood on by foot
(originally circle signifying foot at rest)

pǐ
piece of cloth; a bolt (of cloth);
uncompleted circle flowing into a circle
bù
a step; a pace; walk; march; stages in a process
ideograph of right foot following left foot

zhēng
straight; upright; correct; exact
Chinese 1st month of year

shì
right; yes; am; are; is; to be
ideography locates sun over modified character

zǒu
walk; run; hasten; depart
upper part "bending"
lower part "to stop"
thus bending and stopping = walking
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>tǔ</th>
<th>zuò</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>earth; soil; ground, dust</td>
<td>to sit; seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earth = two layers from which plants sprout</td>
<td>two men talking face to face on the earth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>chū</th>
<th>shēng</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go out; issue; produce</td>
<td>to be born; to give birth; life; to grow;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stalk thrusting out of pot</td>
<td>earth producing a plant lays groundwork for growth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
xìng
surname; family name; name of woman born

姓

bèi
shells; valuables
pictograph of cowrie shell

贝

jiàn
cheap; inexpensive; lowly
two spears shattering the value of cowrie shells

贱

guì
expensive; dear; honorable; noble; precious;
basket filled with precious cowrie shells

贵
mǎi
Buy
modified net and cowrie shells
(traditional form used for bargain buys, etc.)

mài
Sell
loading "buy" with simplified "out"

shuǐ
water/ river
surging waters with a central mainstream and 4 surging waters
variant form uses only 3 drops of water

yǒng
everlasting; perpetual; forever
but come and go, but water flows forever
water + added foams and ripples
bīng
Ice
radical water dripping and freezing into icicle

quán
spring;
fountain
pure + water

yǔ
Rain
raindrops falling down
from cloud in the heavens

lòu
funnel; to leak; to let out; to divulge
rain under a roof + more water as radical
yún
cloud; (abbr.) for Yunnan; surname; humid vapors rise, condense, and form clouds

xuě
Snow
rain + hand
rain you can hold in your hand

diàn
lightning; electric; electricity; electrical;
(crop of) field + motion

léi
(surname); thunder;
rain clouds over his fields means thunder
săn
umbrella; parasol; the traditional form has four persons under cover

chuān
river, stream the main stream is joined by smaller streams on either side on which it depends

shān
mountain, hill a range with three towering peaks

niǎo
Bird bird in a cage
Island
birds perch on peak (mountain) sticking out of ocean and forming an island

Crow same as "bird" but with eyes omitted (can't see eyes on black birds?)

Fly flying crane with neck tucked in, and wings

feathers, wings pictograph of a pair of wings
xí
- to practice; to study; habit;
- young bird trying to fly
- trad combines "wings" + "sell"

shān
- to fan
- wing or feathers + one leaf of a door

yú
- fish (noun)
- field suggesting harvesting food
- (trad form has bottom as form of fire suggesting cooking the fish)

yú
- Fishing
- fish + water
**lu**
stupid, simple
trad fish + nose
corrupted to fish + speak

**yáng**
(surname);
sheep, goat
frontal pictograph of horns, etc

**xiān**
Fresh
fish + sheep
despite salt, ancient man preferred to eat them fresh

**gāo**
lamb, kid sheep ready to stand on its four feet (or to stand on the fire, ready for eating?)
**měi**
beautiful, admirable
sheep + big
a gentle (person)
grown big, a mature person with disposition of a sheep

**yì**
justice, righteousness
trad the aggressive spear of "I" becomes subdued like a sheep
simplified: balanced justice

**yáng**
ocean, foreign
sheep + water, so water far away from sheep = ocean and by extension, "foreign"

**xiàng**
covert, desire
sheep + saliva mouth water
huǒ
Fire
pictograph of two sticks rubbing together with flames

yán
blaze; flame;
inflammation;
-itis;
two fires

tán
chat; talk
words next to the fire

huī
ashes; dust;
gray
(product of) fire (things that you can hold) in the hand
zāi
Calamity, disaster
fire under your roof

shān
incite; instigate; stir up
fanning a flame

shāo
burn; bake; roast
fire + spear piled on a pedestal (as in tempering in a kiln)

hēi
black; dark; Heilongjiang Province (abbrev.);
modified flame under a window blackening it
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>墨</td>
<td>mò</td>
<td>ink; Chinese ink; black + earth, Chinese ink blocks made of soot mixed with gum, an earthy substance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>黒</td>
<td>diǎn</td>
<td>(downwards-right convex character stroke); o'clock; (a measure word); point; dot; decimal point;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>草</td>
<td>cǎo</td>
<td>grass; straw; draft (of a document); careless; rough; manuscript; hasty;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>草</td>
<td>miáo</td>
<td>(surname); Miao tribe; sprouts; shoots; grain stalks growing in a field = shoots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Characters</td>
<td>Meanings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yè</td>
<td>Leaves</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>huā</td>
<td>Flowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chá</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yīng</td>
<td>(surname); English; brave; heroic mature man, in a large space, thick with vegetation = brave man in the jungle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

- **yè**: Leaves. Simplified: borrows character for harmony.
- **huā**: Flowers. Grass + man turning head over heels (metamorphosis) i.e.: that part of the plant that undergoes radical change.
- **chá**: Tea. Grass, picked from tree-like plant, is dried under cover.
- **yīng**: (surname); English; brave; heroic. Mature man, in a large space, thick with vegetation = brave man in the jungle.
zhú
Bamboo
pictograph of two whorls of bamboo leaves

bǐ
pen; pencil, writing brush; to write or compose; the strokes of Chinese characters hand holding bamboo

suàn
regard as; to figure; to calculate; to compute
two hands + abacus made of bamboo

xiào
laugh; smile
man shaking his head like a bamboo in the wind
hé  cereal; grain; tree + ripened head of grain

qiū  autumn; fall; harvest time; a swing; in autumn, grain ripens

chóu  sad; melancholy; autumn of the heart

shuì  Tax; grain + exchange
**tū**
bald; blunt; bare
top or head of man after grain harvest

**sū**
revive
traditional: fish + grain + grass, the weed that revives easily
simplified: power, equally balanced on both sides + weed

**hé**
and; together with; with;
peace; harmony; union;
grain + mouth

**nián**
Year
man bearing sheaf of grain - the job of the year
甘
gān
(surname); sweet; Qinghai province (abbrev.); mouth with something worth holding - ie: sweet

香
xiāng
fragrant; incense; (of food) savory; appetizing; sweet; scented; popular;

牛
niú
ox; cow; bull originally pictograph with two horns, now only one

件
jiàn
piece; article a measure word for thing, clothes, item;
láo
cattle pen;
prison
formerly cattle inside a corral but now under a roof

bàn
half; semi-;
incomplete;
(after a number) and a half;
from cutting ox into two halves, lengthwise for exact division

bàn
companion;
associate;
mate
man + half completes the whole

gào
to tell; to inform; to say;
to do with the mouth what the ox does with it's horns, gore
mù
shepherd; tend cattle,
cattle + modified "oversee"
with right hand holding a rod

ròu
flesh; meat
pictograph of pieces of dried meat wrapped in a bundle

pàng
fat; fleshy, plump
flesh + half a bull

yǒu
to have; there is; there are;
to exist; to be;
hand grasping the moon
lái
- to come
- originally pictograph of growing wheat or barley
- now rice + tree the harvest "comes"

běn
- roots or stems of plants; origin; source; this; the current; root; foundation; basis; (a measure word);
- pictograph of tree with root emphasized by horizontal stroke showing the ground

tǐ
- body; form; style; system;
- man + root = man's root

quǒ
- fruit; result;
- field on top of tree (crop of trees)
kB
subject; class; lesson;
modified words + fruit

cháo
Nest
three fledglings on top of fruit

mò
end; final stage; latter part;
tree with tip emphasized by horizontal stroke

wèi
1-3 p.m.; 8th earthly branch; not yet; did not; have not; not;
tree + second horizontal stroke emphasized (not yet attained the end)
mèi
younger sister
woman + not yet

jiē
elder sister
woman + stool
with two rungs

ài
love; affection
regular form: breathe into heart with gracious motion
simplified: breathe into + hand in hand

xiǎng
to think; to believe; to suppose; to wish;
to want; to miss;
inspect (eye behind a tree) over heart
inspect in the heart of mind = hope, ponder,
think
yì
recall; remember; reflect
traditional: sound over heart + second
simplified: heart + second heart

wàng
to forget; to overlook; to neglect; disappear or perish over heart

kuài
quick; fast
heart + pictograph of man and hand drawing a bowstring
qī
- to roost / perch / nest
- to live in poverty
- to seek refuge
  simplified: tree + west
  traditional: tree + wife

dōng
- East
- traditional: sun peeping thru tree

jiàn
- to see; to meet; to appear (to be sth); to interview;
  originally eye on top of legs

shuō
- to speak; to say;
  words being exchanged (pontificating) by elder brother
chǐ
Teeth
stops (foot) in a man's mouth = teeth

 bèi
cowries; shell; valuables; shellfish; traditional: pictograph of cowrie shell

jiàn
cheap; inexpensive, lowly
simplified: one spear shattering the value of simplified cowrie shell
traditional: two spears shattering the value of traditional cowrie shell

guì
expensive; dear; honorable
basket filled with precious cowrie shells
mǎi
Buy
modified net and cowrie shells
(traditional form used for bargain buys, etc.)

mài
Sell
loading "buy" with simplified "out"

yún
Cloud
humid vapors rise, condense, and form clouds

diàn
lightning; electricity
(crop of) field + motion
săn
Umbrella
the traditional form has four persons under cover

niǎo
Bird
bird in a cage

dǎo
Island
birds perch on peak (mountain) sticking out of ocean and forming an island

wū
Crow
Trad same as "bird" but with eyes omitted (can't see eyes on black birds?)
飞 (fēi)
Fly
flying crane with neck tucked in, and wings

习 (xí)
to practice; to study; habit;
young bird trying to fly
trad form combines "wings" + "sell"

魚 (yú)
fish (noun)
field suggesting harvesting food
trad form has bottom as form of fire suggesting cooking the fish

漁 (yú)
Fishing
fish + water
shén
God; unusual; mysterious; soul; spirit; divine essence; lively; spiritual being;

xiān
Fresh fish + sheep despite salt, ancient man preferred to eat them fresh

yì
justice, righteousness trad. the aggressive spear of "I" becomes subdued like a sheep simplified and balanced justice

hù
a household; door; family;
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<td>tǎn</td>
<td>chat; talk words next to the fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dǎn</td>
<td>dǎn</td>
<td>brush away; dust off; a brush or duster; to dust;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zāi</td>
<td>zāi</td>
<td>disaster; calamity; fire under your roof</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shāo</td>
<td>shāo</td>
<td>burn; bake; roast fire + spear piled on a pedestal (as in tempering in a kiln)</td>
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o'clock; (a measure word); point; dot; (decimal point);
to divine + mouth (ie: orally)
the cracks of a heated tortoise shell + black

yè
leaves
simplified: borrows character for harmony

bǐ
pen; pencil
hand holding bamboo

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Revive
traditional: fish + grain + grass, the weed that revives easily
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- to come
- originally pictograph of growing wheat or barley now rice + tree
- the harvest "comes"

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recall; remember; reflect
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shǒu
hand; convenient;
pictograph

yú
stupid;

měi
beautiful;