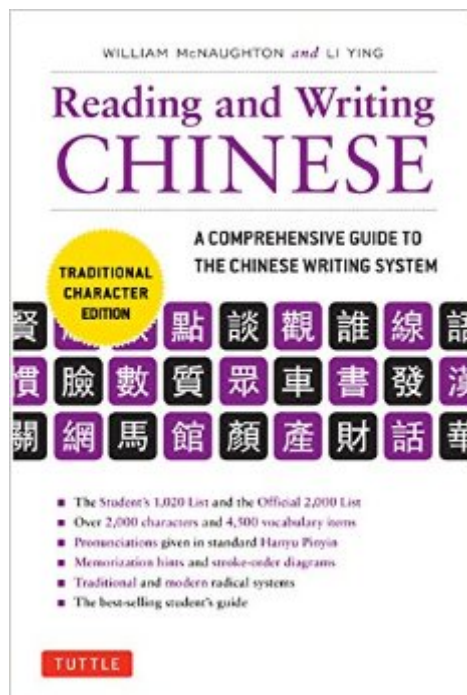


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Reading & Writing Chinese Traditional Character Edition: A Comprehensive Guide To The Chinese Writing System



Synopsis

This is a complete and easy-to-use guide for reading and writing traditional Chinese characters. Reading and Writing Chinese has been the leading text for foreign students and teachers of the Chinese writing system since it was first published. This completely revised edition draws on the lessons learnt from the use of the book in classrooms so as to provide a more convenient and up-to-date introduction to written Chinese. Over 1,100 new combinations of characters have been added, increasing the total vocabulary significantly to about 4,500 items. There are also new notes on usage to give students insight into the contemporary state of the Chinese language. The student's ability to read Chinese and write Chinese are reinforced throughout. For each of the basic 1,062 characters, the pronunciation, definition and derivation are given, with examples of the use of most words and a chart showing how to write each character. Memorization tips and cautionary cross-reference to look-alike characters are also provided, as well as notes to help clarify those overlooked aspects of the Chinese writing system. Key features of this book: The Student's 1,020 List and the Official 2,000 List. Over 2,000 characters and 4,500 vocabulary items. Pronunciations given in standard Hanyu Pinyin Romanized form. Memorization hints and stroke-order diagrams. Hong Kong/Taiwan and China/Singapore forms. Traditional and modern radical systems. The best-selling student's guide

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Customer Reviews

McNaughton's 'Reading and Writing Chinese' remains a very useful guide for learners attempting to

acquire literacy in Chinese. It comprises two sections, the first listing some 1,062 elementary* characters with its stroke order, Mandarin pronunciation and meaning, as well as a few compound words using the character and the simplified version of the character if it exists. The second section comprises the remainder of the characters in the official list of 2,000 basic characters promulgated by the Chinese government, and gives much the same information as the first section, save the stroke order (which the learner should already be conversant with after learning the first section) and the compound words. The book contains a number of useful indices that may be used to look up unfamiliar characters by pronunciation, stroke-count, etc.*McNaughton has adopted a largely pedagogical order in the presentation of characters. Unlike many books which present the most commonly-used characters first (although this is not to say that the characters he presents are not, in the main, common ones), characters that are geometrically simplest are first presented, and complex characters are built-up from the simpler parts already presented. This does, in many ways, aid the memorisation of complex characters, if their parts are already known, but it also has the effect of presenting some rare, obscure, archaic or otherwise obsolete characters early on, so that they may be used as a section of a more complex, but common, character later on. Similarly, the compound words are chosen so that they only use characters that have already been learnt.

I started learning to write Chinese by working my way through this book, memorizing the characters, pronunciation, and definitions. Now I sort of regret it. The list of characters is reasonable enough. If your goal is to memorize a bunch of characters, these are good ones to concentrate on, and they're generally presented in a reasonable order. The stroke order diagrams are helpful when you're first starting out, and it isn't a problem that they're only present for the first half of the list of characters; by the time you finish the part of the book with the diagrams, you will have long since developed a good intuitive sense of the stroke order rules. Unfortunately, beyond the selection of characters and the diagrams, it kind of falls short. My biggest complaint is that the definitions are often not good. When a character has multiple meanings (as most of them do) you can't count on the most common meaning being first in the list, and in some cases common meanings aren't listed at all. If you're using the definitions to make flashcards, you'll be frustrated by the number of times two characters are given exactly the same English definition, even though in reality they differ in connotation or in usage. There is never any distinction made between characters that stand as words on their own and characters that only ever appear as parts of compound words, which will definitely trip you up a lot if you're using this as a source of vocabulary. And the compound words are sometimes obscure or very old-fashioned terms that, if you say them to a Chinese speaker, will cause them to give you

a puzzled look and ask where the heck you learned THAT old word. The font used for the characters is a typewritten one.

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