

## Perfect Your Hanzi With These Chinese Character Stroke Order Rules

I think it's fair to say that just trying to recognise Chinese characters is hard enough. Even when you know your **radicals** inside out, have made a nice story (or mnemonic) woman 女 (nǚ) under a roof 宀 (mián) = peace 安 (ān), putting pen to paper can still be a bit of a daunting prospect.

Remembering the stroke order for each and every Chinese character is, according to many of you, the most difficult thing about learning Chinese. However, ACTUALLY learning the stroke order for Characters often helps the learner to remember the character, which is why Chinese character stroke order is taught in Chinese Schools from a young age. Kind of a nice catch 22 there isn't it?

As with all 'alphabets' there are rules to produce the shape of a letter or character. In my past life as an English teacher, I taught lots of children to read and write English, and the first thing they want to do is break the rules and draw a ball and a stick to make the letter 'd'. As frustrating as this was for me, I do understand why and also have to admit that I, a grown woman over 20 years older than my students was also a culprit of writing (albeit Chinese characters) however I wanted.

## Chinese Character Stroke Order Rules

So, here are some rules for writing characters that will hopefully help you get to grips with Chinese Character strokes. Of course, even with these stroke order rules, there are always rebellious characters that don't follow the standard and for those, you can always check out the stroke animations on both our **online dictionary** and our **Written Chinese Dictionary App**.

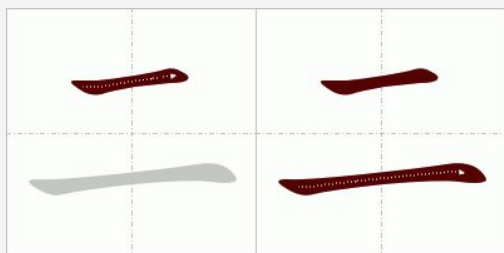
It's also important for me to add that there are different strokes patterns for different locations. The stroke system in Hong Kong is different from that of Taiwan and Traditional stroke patterns differ from the order in Mainland China. Since Written Chinese focuses on Mandarin Chinese, the stroke order rules shown here are those used in PRC (People's Republic of China).

# Written Chinese

## 1. From Top to Bottom, Left to Right

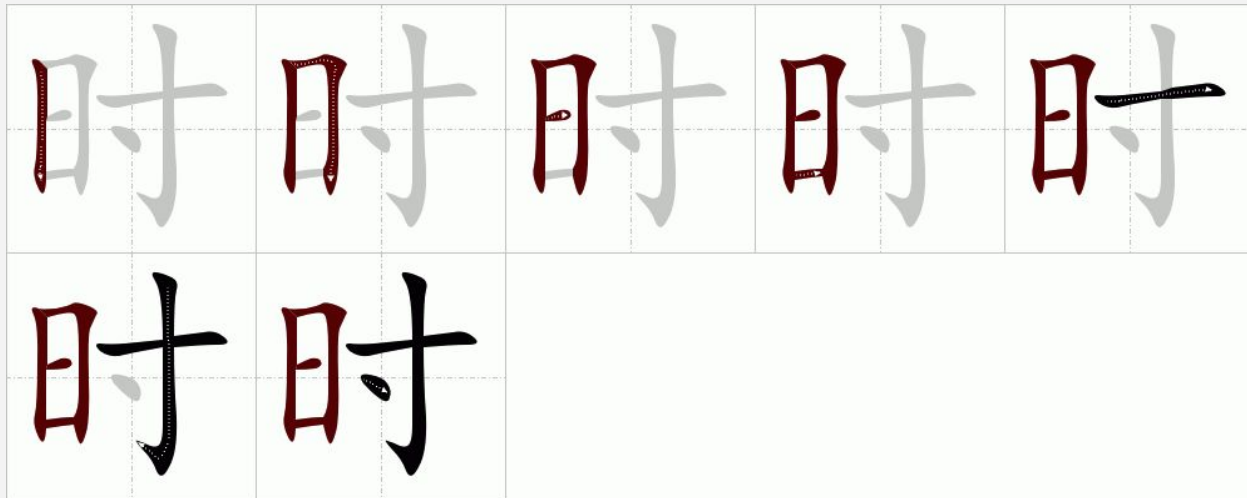
Maybe the most important things to remember is that MOST of the time (but not always) characters are written from top to bottom and left to right.

### Example 1 二 (èr)



A simple example of this is 二 (èr). Begin at the top left corner and cross to the right side. Repeat with the line below.

### Example 2 时 (shí)



This is the same when a character is separated into radicals. So, for example, with the character 时(shí), the radical on the left 日(rì) is completed first (see the stroke animation).

### Example 3 要(yào)

# Written 字 Chinese

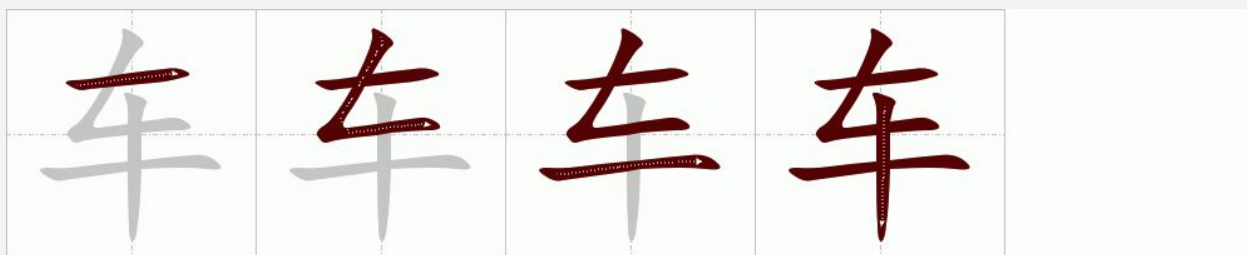


However, if there is a radical above like in the 要 (yào) character, the radical on the top is completed first.

## 2. Horizontal then Vertical

Our next stroke order rule is that usually, when a horizontal and a vertical line cross, the horizontal lines are written first.

### Example 1 车 (chē)

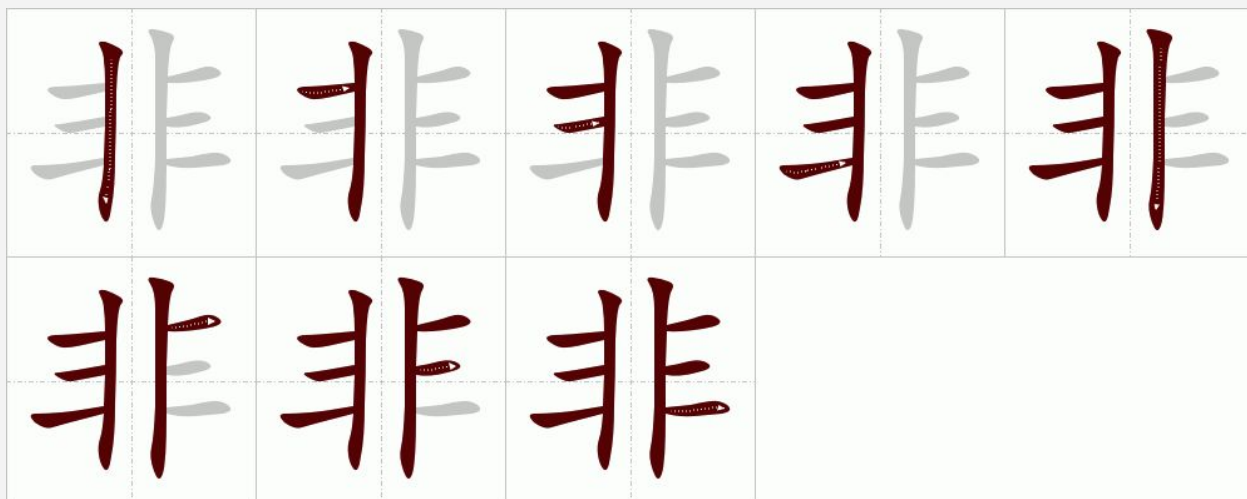


The first stroke of 车 (chē) is the top horizontal line, followed by the diagonal line from top to bottom.

## 3. From the Inside Out if Symmetrical

### Example 1 非 (fēi)

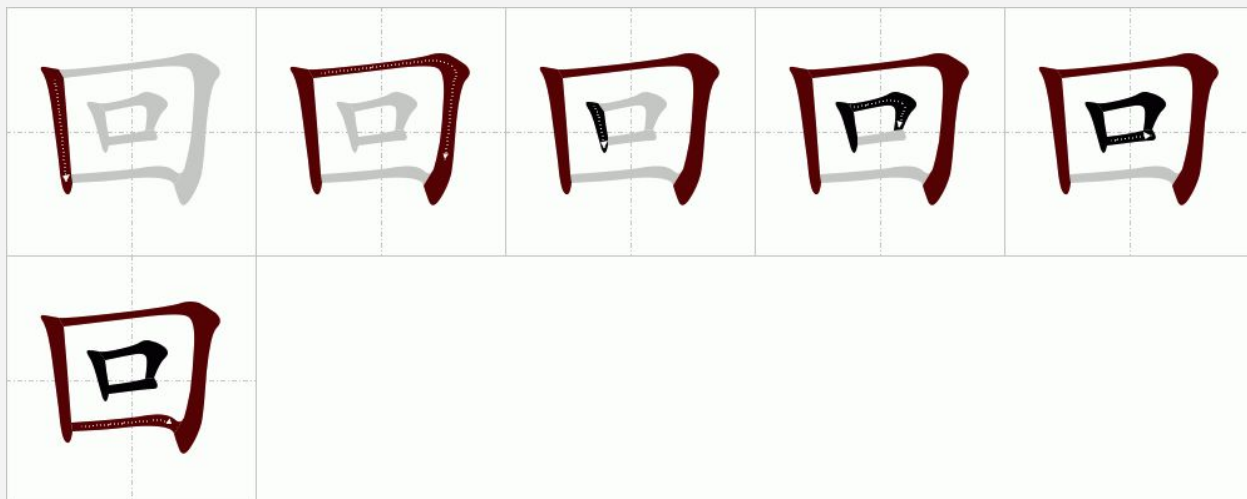
# Written 字 Chinese



If the character is almost symmetrical like 非 (fēi), begin from the inside and then complete the outside from the left side and then the right.

4. 'Enclosed' Characters Finish with the Bottom Horizontal to 'Close' the character.

## Example 1 回 (huí)



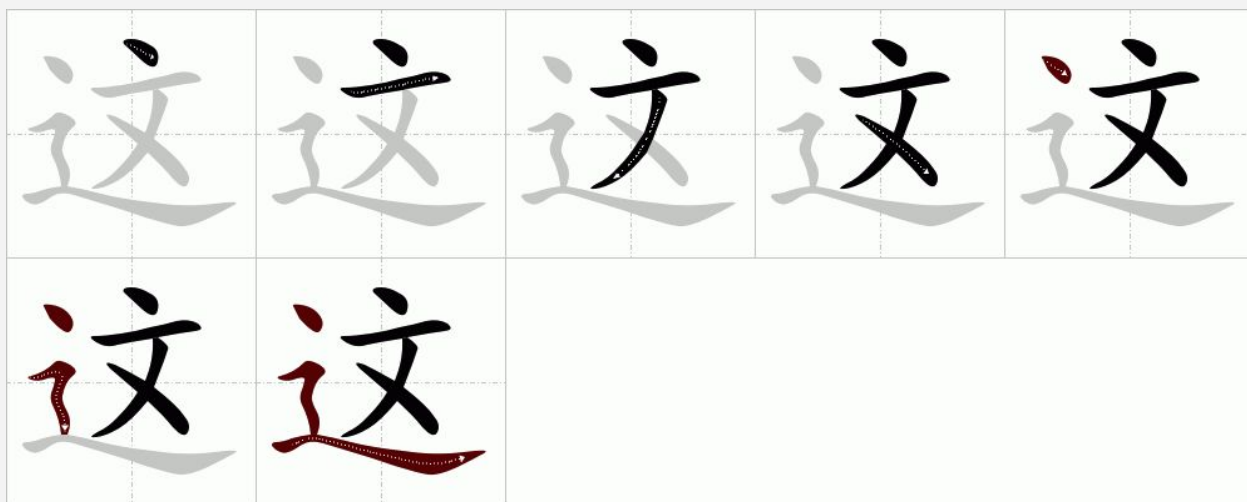
If the character is 'enclosed' for example, there is a box surrounding another character element, begin the enclosure like the character 回 (huí). The first

# Written 字 Chinese

three lines of the enclosure are completed and then the central character is added, finished with a line from left to right at the bottom of the character.

## 5. 'Enclose' a Character on the Bottom Left at the End

### Example 1 这 (zhè)



Bottom 'enclosures' are usually last. For example, in the character 这 (zhè) the right side of the character is completed first and the enclosure follows.

## 6. Dots and Dashes are Completed Last

### Example 1 雨 (yǔ)

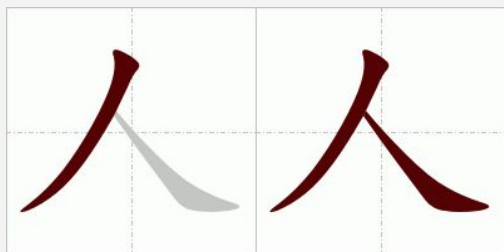
# Written 字 Chinese



Dots and smaller lines are usually added at the end. For example, with the character 雨 (yǔ), the external lines are completed first, then the 'dots' or rain (this is the character for rain) come at the end.

## 7. 丿 First, Then ㇏

Example 1 人 (rén)



When a Chinese character is made up of 2 sides, the left-hand side is written first.

Other examples include 八 (bā), 文 (wén) and 入 (rù).

## 8. Outside First, Then Inside

Example 1 问 (wèn)

# Written 字 Chinese

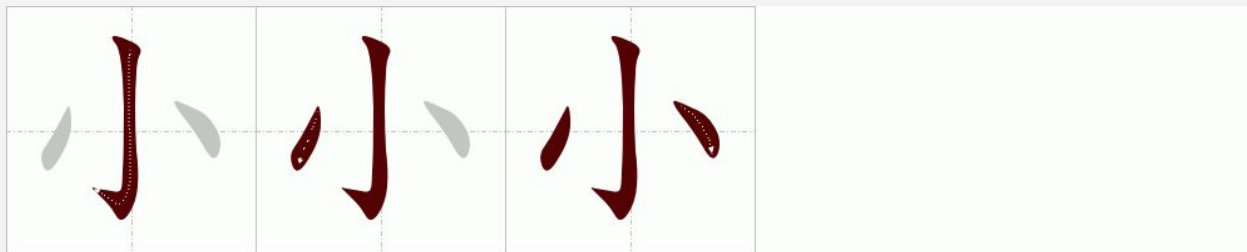


If a character has an obvious inner and outer section, then the outside is written first. Complete the character by adding the inner section.

Other examples include 母 (mǔ), 周 (zhōu) and 月 (yuè).

## 9. Middle First, Then Two Sides

Example 1 小 (xiǎo)



If a character has a middle and sides, like the 小 character, begin with the central stroke and end with the two sides.

Other examples include 水 (shuǐ), 办 (bàn) and 永 (yǒng).

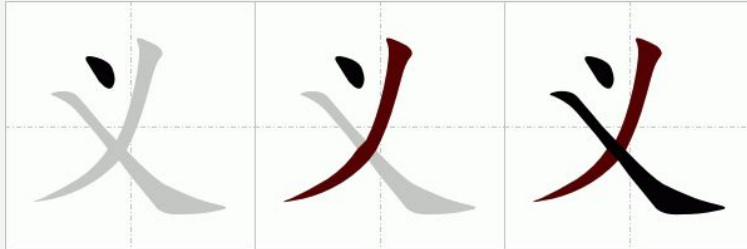
## 10. Special Rules For 丶 (diǎn)



# Written 字 Chinese

1. If 丶 is in the top left, **write it first**

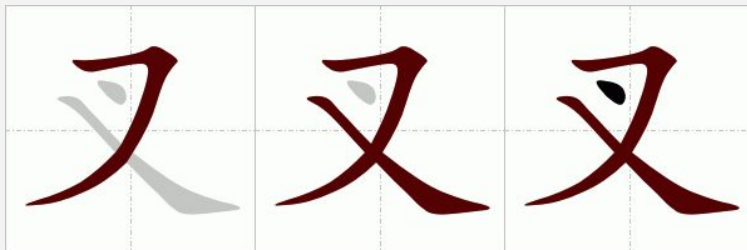
Example 1 义 (yì)



Other examples include 主 (zhǔ), 头 (tóu) and 为 (wèi).

2. If 丶 is in the top right and inside, **write it last**

Example 1 叉 (chā)



Other examples include 瓦 (wǎ), 裁 (zāi) and 试 (shì).

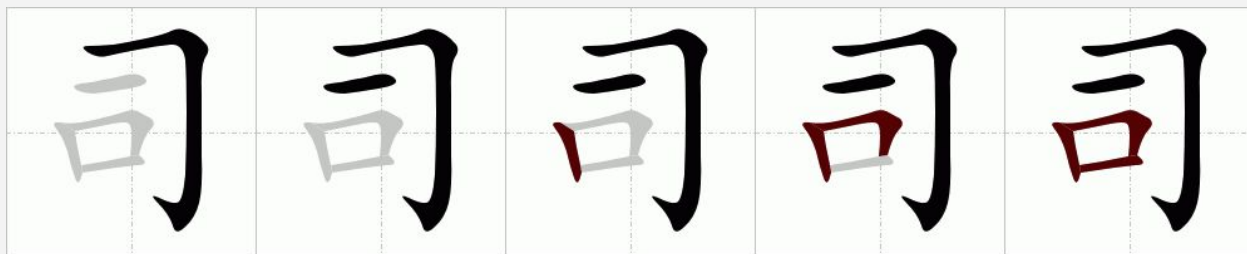
## 11. Special Rules For Characters Enclosed on Two Sides

1. If the top right and top left are enclosed, **write outside first** then inside

Example 1 司 (sī)



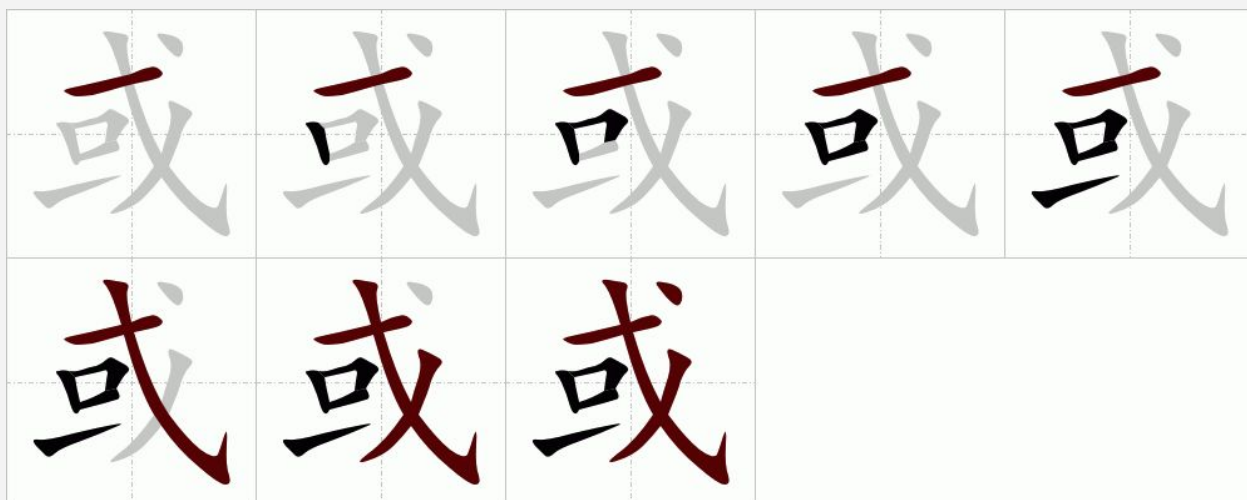
# Written 字 Chinese



Other examples include 勺 (sháo), 氫 (yǎng), 丘 (jīn), 房 (fáng) and 床 (chuáng).

This rule is broken when a character includes the 戈 (gē) or 戈 (yì) radical.

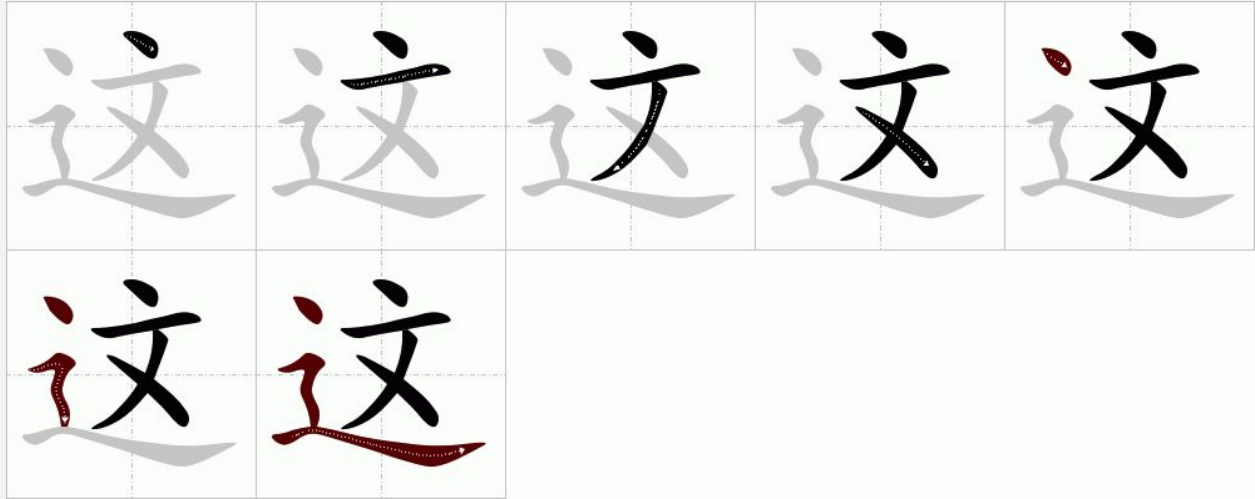
Examples include 戒 (jiè), 或 (huò) and 式 (shì).



2. If the bottom right is enclosed, **write the inside first** then the outside

Example 1 这 (zhè)

# Written 字 Chinese



These include characters that contain either the 辶 (chuò) or 廴 radical.

Other examples include 过 (guò), 建 (jiàn) and 延 (yán).

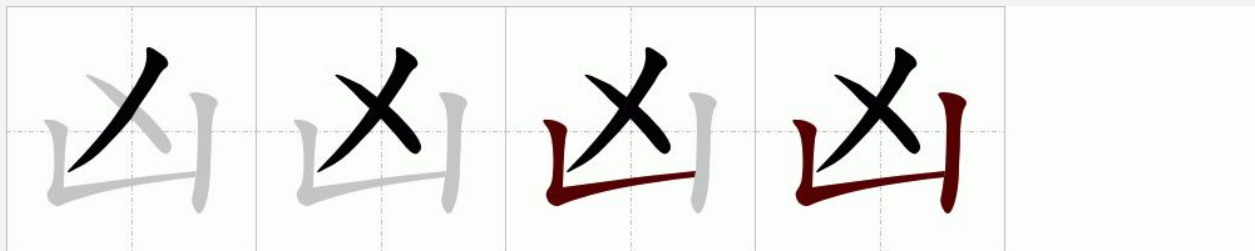
This rule is broken when a character includes one of the following radicals: 毛 (máo), 走 (zǒu), 鬼 (guǐ), 风 (fēng) and 是 (shì).

Examples include: 毡 (zhān), 赵 (zhào), 魅 (mèi), 飏 (yáng) and 题 (tí).

## 12. Rules For Characters Enclosed on Three Sides

1. If there is a gap at the top, **write the inside first** then the outside

Example 1 凶 (xiōng)



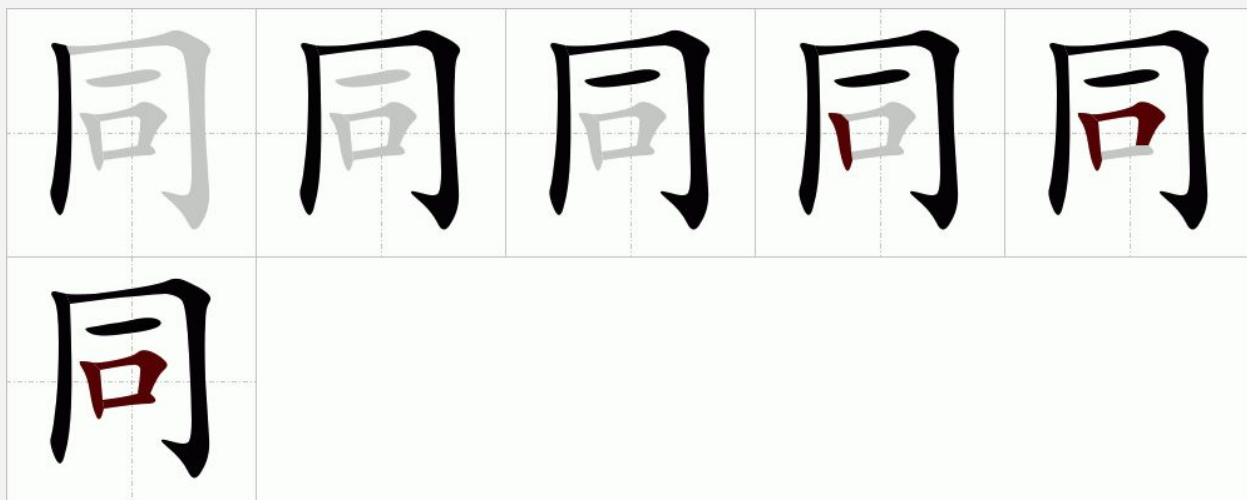
# Written 字 Chinese

Example 2 幽 (yōu)



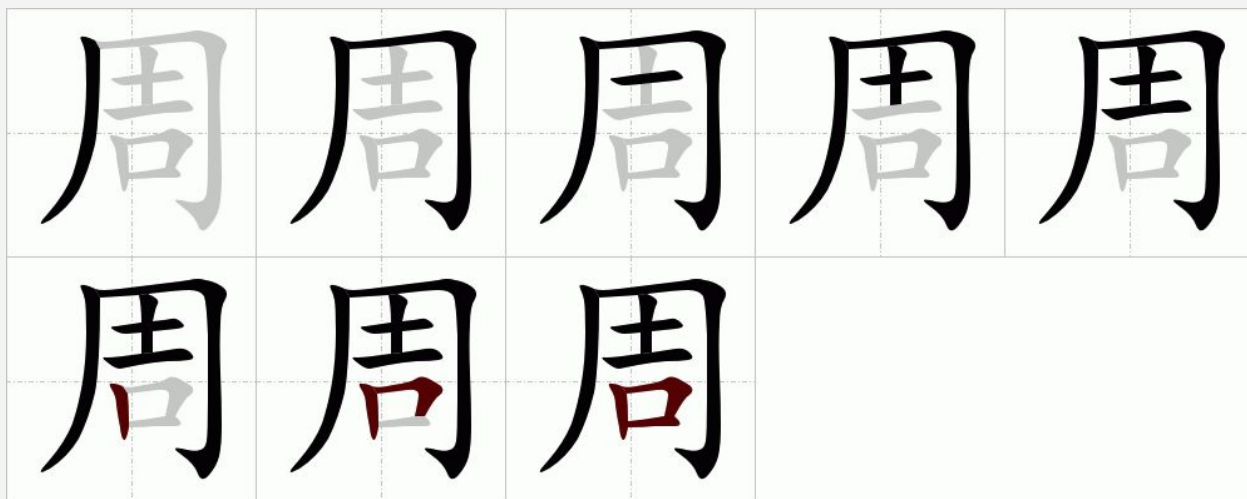
2. If there is a gap at the bottom, **write the outside first** then the inside

Example 1 同 (tóng)



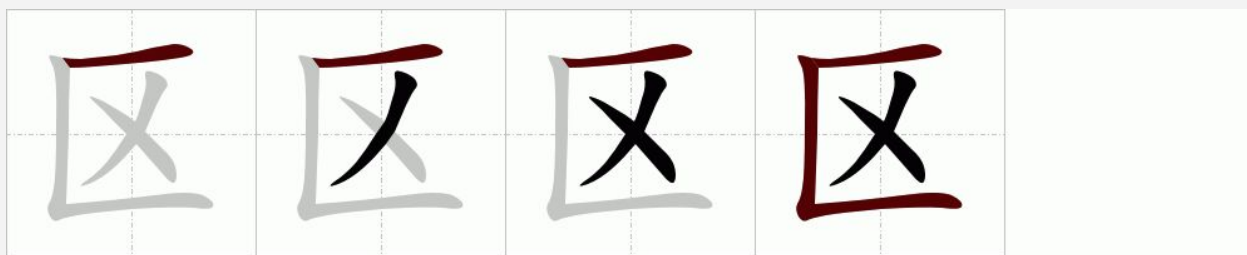
Example 2 周 (zhōu)

# Written 字 Chinese

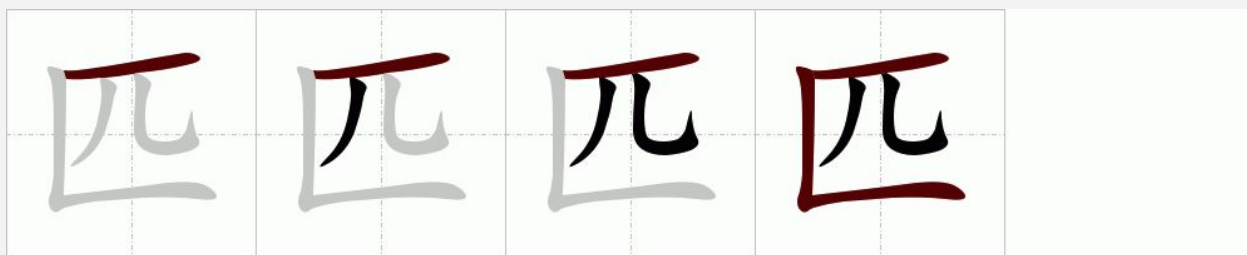


3. If there is a gap on the right, **start from the top**, then the inside and finally the left and bottom

Example 1 区 (qū)



Example 2 匹 (pǐ)



## Test Your Chinese Stroke Order Rules Knowledge

# Written Chinese

The following characters are often written incorrectly. Test your new knowledge and then check the answers by clicking each character!

匕 (bǐ)

万 (wàn)

及 (jí)

乃 (nǎi)

贯 (guàn)

重 (zhòng)

凹 (āo)

凸 (tū)

爽 (shuǎng)

## Practice Makes Perfect

Each Chinese stroke also has a name, that you can learn in our articles that will teach you the [names of 20 Chinese character strokes](#).

To perfect your Chinese Character stroke order, the best way is to practice! Although you can use plain or lined paper, it's better to use the proper [Chinese writing books](#) that have four squares. These will [keep your characters balanced](#), legible and will keep them uniform (It's really easy to extend a stroke here and there and write a completely different character!).

If you want to try something a little different, why not [check out Skritter](#), the handwriting platform?! You can practice both traditional and simplified Chinese, as well as Japanese Kanji. The platform is online and also on mobile and you can [try a 7-day free trial here by using our special link](#) and clicking SIGN UP at the top of the page!

# Written Chinese

Finally, use our [online dictionary](#) or get our free [Written Chinese Dictionary app](#) and download the stroke animation software (also free) and view animation for 1000s of characters.