

100 most common  
Chinese characters

最常用的100个汉字

他

它



## Introduction

Chinese often has a reputation for being extremely difficult because of the large number of characters. In reality, while complete literacy may require knowledge of 5,000–6,000 characters, many of these are rarely used in everyday texts. A relatively small set of characters appears again and again.

For example, if you know 100 common characters, you can already recognize roughly 10–15% of the characters that appear in native Chinese texts. This doesn't mean you will fully understand everything you read, but it does mean that even at an early stage you will start recognizing familiar symbols and patterns.

Lists like this one can be very useful. They allow you to track your progress, check which characters you already know, and identify which ones you still need to learn. Many learners enjoy printing such lists and marking or highlighting the characters they recognize, which can be very motivating as the number grows over time.

However, it's important to remember that Chinese characters rarely appear alone. Most of the time they are part of two-character or multi-character words. Because of this, many teachers recommend learning characters in context—within a word, phrase, or even a full sentence—rather than memorizing them in isolation. This helps you understand how they are actually used and makes them easier to remember.

For example:

- 学 (xué) — to learn
- 学习 (xuéxí) — to study
- 学生 (xuéshēng) — student
- 学校 (xuéxiào) — school

Learning characters through words like these helps you build both vocabulary and character recognition at the same time.

A few additional tips for learners:

- **Focus on frequency.** Learning the most common characters first gives you the biggest return for your effort.
- **Pay attention to components and radicals.** Many characters share common building blocks that can help you guess meaning or pronunciation.
- **Review regularly.** Spaced repetition tools can be extremely effective for memorizing characters.
- **Read as early as possible.** Even simple graded texts will help reinforce the characters you learn.
- **Be patient.** Character learning is a gradual process, but progress compounds quickly over time.

This list of the 100 most common Chinese characters is meant to serve as a starting point and a reference tool. Whether you use it to check your knowledge, plan your study, or simply track your progress, remember that each character you learn brings you one step closer to reading Chinese with confidence.



## 100 most common Chinese characters

#	Character	Pinyin	Radical	English
1	的	de	白	possessive particle / of
2	一	yī	一	one
3	是	shì	日	to be
4	不	bù	一	not
5	了	le / liǎo	丿	completed action particle
6	在	zài	土	at / in
7	人	rén	人	person
8	有	yǒu	月	to have
9	我	wǒ	戈	I / me
10	他	tā	人	he / him
11	这	zhè	讠	this
12	个	gè	人	general measure word

13	们	men	人	plural marker
14	中	zhōng		middle / China
15	来	lái	木	come
16	上	shàng	一	up / above
17	大	dà	大	big
18	为	wèi	丶	for / because
19	和	hé	口	and
20	国	guó	口	country
21	地	dì	土	earth / land
22	到	dào	丨	arrive
23	以	yǐ	人	by means of
24	说	shuō	讠	speak
25	时	shí	日	time
26	要	yào	西	want / need
27	就	jiù	尢	then

28	出	chū	ㄔ	exit
29	会	huì	人	can / meeting
30	可	kě	口	can / may
31	也	yě	乙	also
32	你	nǐ	人	you
33	对	duì	寸	correct / toward
34	生	shēng	生	life / give birth
35	能	néng	月	able to
36	而	ér	而	and / but
37	子	zǐ	子	child
38	那	nà	ㄋ	that
39	得	dé	ㄉ	obtain / must
40	于	yú	二	in / at
41	着	zhe	目	continuous particle

42	下	xià	一	down
43	自	zì	自	self
44	之	zhī	、	classical possessive
45	年	nián	干	year
46	过	guò	过	pass / cross
47	发	fā	又	send / develop
48	后	hòu	口	after
49	作	zuò	人	do / make
50	里	lǐ	里	inside
51	用	yòng	用	use
52	道	dào	过	way / path
53	行	xíng	行	go / OK
54	所	suǒ	户	place / that which
55	然	rán	然	so / correct

56	家	jiā	宀	home
57	种	zhǒng	禾	type / seed
58	事	shì	亅	matter
59	成	chéng	戈	become
60	方	fāng	方	direction
61	多	duō	夕	many
62	经	jīng	纟	pass through
63	么	me	丿	interrogative particle
64	去	qù	厶	go
65	法	fǎ	灬	method
66	学	xué	子	study
67	如	rú	女	like / as
68	都	dōu	阝	all
69	同	tóng	冂	same
70	现	xiàn	王	appear

71	当	dāng	ㄉㄤ	should / act as
72	没	méi	ㄇㄟˊ	not have
73	动	dòng	ㄉㄨㄥˋ	move
74	面	miàn	ㄇㄧㄢˋ	face / surface
75	起	qǐ	ㄑㄩˇ	rise
76	看	kàn	ㄎㄢˋ	look
77	定	dìng	ㄉㄩㄥˋ	decide
78	天	tiān	ㄊㄧㄢ	sky / day
79	分	fēn	ㄈㄣ	divide
80	还	hái	ㄏㄞˊ	still / return
81	进	jìn	ㄐㄩㄣˋ	enter
82	好	hǎo	ㄏㄞˇ	good
83	小	xiǎo	ㄒㄩㄢˇ	small
84	部	bù	ㄅㄨˋ	part
85	其	qí	ㄑㄧˊ	its

86	些	xiē	二	some
87	主	zhǔ	丶	master
88	样	yàng	木	appearance
89	理	lǐ	王	reason
90	心	xīn	心	heart
91	她	tā	女	she
92	本	běn	木	root / origin
93	前	qián	丷	before
94	开	kāi	升	open
95	但	dàn	人	but
96	因	yīn	口	because
97	只	zhǐ	口	only
98	从	cóng	人	from / follow
99	想	xiǎng	心	think
100	实	shí	宀	real



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