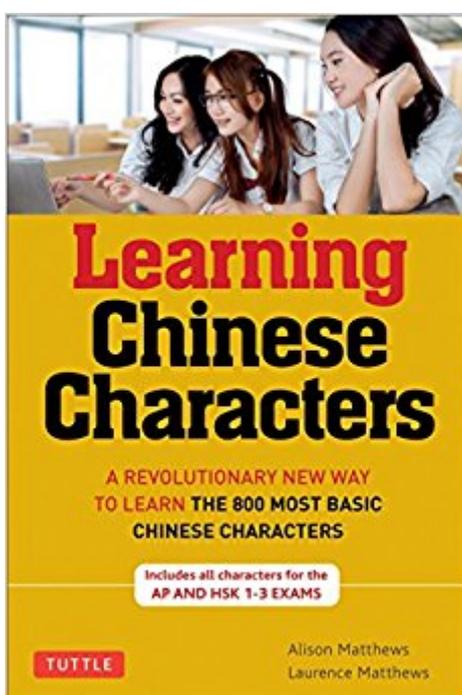The book was found

Tuttle Learning Chinese Characters: (HSK Levels 1 -3) A Revolutionary New Way To Learn And Remember The 800 Most Basic Chinese Characters

Synopsis

This userâ "friendly book is aimed at helping students of Mandarin Chinese learn and remember Chinese characters.At lastâ "there is a truly effective and enjoyable way to learn Chinese characters! This book helps students to learn and remember both the meanings and the pronunciations of over 800 characters. This otherwise daunting task is made easier by the use of techniques based on the psychology of learning and memory. key principles include the use of visual imagery, the visualization of short "stories," and the systematic building up of more complicated characters from basic building blocks. Although Learning Chinese Characters is primarily a book for serious learners of Mandarin Chinese, it can be used by anyone with an interest in Chinese characters, without any prior knowledge of Chinese. It can be used alongside (or after, or even before) a course in the Chinese language. All characters are simplified (as in mainland China) but traditional characters are also given, when available. Key features: Specially designed pictures and stories are used in a structured way to make the learning process more enjoyable and effective, reducing the need for rote learning to the absolute minimum. The emphasis throughout is on learning and remembering the meanings and pronunciations of the characters. Tips are also included on learning techniques and how to avoid common problems. Characters are introduced in a logical sequence, which also gives priority to learning the most common characters first. Modern simplified characters are used, with pronunciations given in pinyin. Key information is given for each character, including radical, strokeâ "count, traditional form, compounds, and guidance on writing the character.This is a practical guide with a clear, concise and appealing layout, and it is wellâ "indexed with easy lookâ "up methods. The 800 Chinese characters and 1,033 compounds specified for the original HSK Level A proficiency test are covered.

Book Information

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Tuttle Publishing; Original edition (August 15, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 080483816X

ISBN-13: 978-0804838160

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (175 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #22,679 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #14 inÂ Books > Textbooks >

Customer Reviews

I have finally worked my through this entire book and the pages are thumb worn so I believe I can offer an informed review. At first I really liked it and felt it was helping me learn the Hanzi characters quickly. However, after now studying Chinese for over a year I would not recommend the approach I took. I tended to use this book in isolation, learning characters, writing them out, and using homemade flashcards, but not reading them in actual text. I think that that is a big mistake. I have found I need to see the characters in an actual text to really digest them. Perhaps if the student uses this book while learning new characters from a Chinese textbook that would be better, but I would advise strongly against just plowing through the book as I did, learning one character after another and thus do less reading. I find that you don't retain the Hanzi this way.My second criticism is that the book's stories for the characters sometimes seem to determine how they define the word. The more common definitions are at times chosen for less commmon ones and many definitions are completely missing. It would be vastly better if all the words were used in sentence like Tuttle's flashcards are. Moreover, I think a big drawback of the book is that they don't sell accompanying flashcards that use the story. (I think Tuttle's flashcard series is very good but they certainly don't give you the stories used in this book.) Otherwise the student wastes a lot of time creating their own flashcards and mistakes in the writing of the Hanzi are inevitable for the beginner. Thus you are memorizing your own mistakes.I guess the book may be good if combined with other materials in which the student is learning to read Chinese.

I so wish I had had this book when starting to learn Chinese! While studying on my own, I was fascinated with Chinese characters, but I never managed to retain them. During an immersion course in Beijing, I learned to memorize Chinese characters by rote, just writing them over and over again - it worked for the 6 weeks I was there since I had classes every day and used the characters a lot. However, back home and only studying Chinese once a week or so, I quickly forgot all but the most common ones again.Then I stumbled upon James Heisig and his method for learning Kanji (Chinese-derived characters used in Japanese). It was enlightening! I actually remembered the characters, and I can still remember them several years later! Unfortunately many characters in his book aren't really useful when learning Chinese, or they may even teach you incorrectly due to the meanings having changed over time. But I had learned what method would work for people with an

analytical Western mindset like me, people who don't have a good memory for pictures and who hate the dull, time-consuming and ineffective Eastern method of writing characters over and over again.From then on, I used a similar method to learn new Chinese characters I'd encounter or old ones that refused to stick. It was tedious though. My incomplete knowledge of Chinese characters wouldn't let me see the most useful order in which to learn characters and their parts; wouldn't let me distinguish between really useful ones and obsolete ones, and so on. I also had trouble memorizing the pronunciation and especially the tone with each character.The sample of Heisig for Chinese was a disappointment, as it didn't tackle these problems.

Although this book seems to please many reviewers, I think that it is too limited to be of great help to other serious learners. To begin with, the definitions are too limited and not really very accurate. To take two examples, their character 137 is xian1 which is defined as "ahead," but the central meanings are surely "first," "previous," and "before." "Ahead" is one of the meanings, but to single it out and present it all by itself is very misleading. Character 145 is dao4, which is defined as "way," and the little mnemonic story suggests that it is to be taken in the sense of "which way should you walk?" Again, the central meanings are surely "road" and "path."A second fault is the method itself. People may be able to learn characters fairly rapidly this way, and that might help them on exams, but they may also find that they have to go through the whole song and dance each time they want to bring a character to mind. I once taught myself Morse code using short sentences, as in "Sam Said So" to remember that "S" (...) is three short sounds (one-syllable words in the mnemonic). It was very hard to build up any speed because I had to bring the mnemonic to mind in order to access the code. I'm afraid that this would work in much the same way. Brute force has something to recommend it, and that something is an immediate connection. Moreover, to put this method to use, one must spend a lot of time reading and learning little mnemonic stories (and ridiculous ones at that) that have no real relevance to Chinese.I should also say that the "equations" they use to explain "composite" characters completely falsify the nature of the characters themselves. For example, the equation for li4 "stand" (which is their number 177) goes like this "lid + feet = stand.

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