CHINESE BOOST

Traditional Chinese arts Chinese vocabulary list

134 words with pinyin, 繁體 and meanings, 83 of them with an example sentence.
Every word here links to its entry on the site.

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Traditional Chinese arts Chinese vocabulary list on the web
The same words as a CSV, for Anki or a spreadsheet
A free account, which keeps 简体 or 繁體, pinyin or 注音 and the rest of how you read Chinese on every device

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Elementary (HSK 1-3)

笔 筆

bǐ writing brush / writing implement (pen, pencil etc) / sum of money / financial transaction / piece of business / to write (with a brush or pen) / stroke of a Chinese character / style of writing / literary manner / technique of brushwork / brushstroke / stroke (in painting or calligraphy)
dùn grain storage vessel

> 笔在桌子上。
> Bǐ zài zhuōzi shàng.
> The pen is on the table.

Intermediate (HSK 4-6)

京剧 京劇

jīngjù Beijing opera

> 你想不想去看京剧?
> Nǐ xiǎng bùxiǎng qù kàn jīngjù?
> Do you want to go see a Peking opera?

艺术 藝術

yìshù art

> 我喜欢艺术。
> Wǒ xǐhuan yìshù.
> I like art.

作品

zuòpǐn work (of art) / opus

> 我不很熟悉他的作品。
> Wǒ bù hěn shúxī tā de zuòpǐn.
> My acquaintance with his works is slight.

功夫

gōngfu skill / art / kung fu / labor / effort

> 我没功夫吃饭。
> Wǒ méi gōngfu chīfàn.
> I had no time to eat.

书法 書法

shūfǎ calligraphy / handwriting / penmanship

> 你擅长书法吗?
> Nǐ shàncháng shūfǎ ma?
> Are you good at calligraphy?

国画 國畫

guóhuà traditional Chinese painting

> 你想跟老师学国画吗?
> Nǐ xiǎng gēn lǎoshī xué guóhuà ma?
> Do you want to learn traditional Chinese painting from the teacher?

传统 傳統

chuántǒng tradition / traditional

> 中华传统节日有很多。
> Zhōnghuá chuántǒng jiérì yǒu hěn duō.
> There are many traditional Chinese festivals.

手工

shǒugōng handwork / manual

> 孩子周末喜欢在家做手工。
> Háizi zhōumò xǐhuan zàijiā zuò shǒugōng.
> The kids like doing crafts at home on weekends.

风格 風格

fēnggé style

> 不是你的风格。
> Bú shì nǐ de fēnggé.
> It's not your style.

欣赏 欣賞

xīnshǎng to appreciate / to enjoy / to admire

> 我欣赏好音乐。
> Wǒ xīnshǎng hǎo yīnyuè.
> I appreciate good music.

武术 武術

wǔshù military skill or technique (in former times) / all kinds of martial art sports (some claiming spiritual development) / self-defense / tradition of choreographed fights from opera and film (recent usage) / also called kungfu 功夫

> 武术就是人们常说的功夫。
> Wǔshù jiùshì rénmen cháng shuō de gōngfu.
> Wushu is what people often call kung fu.

竹子

zhúzi bamboo

> 花园里有竹子在生长。
> Huāyuán lǐ yǒu zhúzi zài shēngzhǎng.
> There's bamboo growing in the garden.

工艺 工藝
gōngyì arts and crafts / industrial arts

> 新工艺让手机更便宜了。
> Xīn gōngyì ràng shǒujī gèng piányile.
> The new manufacturing process has made phones cheaper.

象征 象徵
xiàngzhēng symbol / emblem / to symbolize / to signify / to represent

> 富士山是日本的象征。
> Fùshì Shān shì Rìběn de xiàngzhēng.
> Mt. Fuji is a symbol of Japan.

美术 美術
měishù art / fine arts / painting

> 他哥哥在大学学美术。
> Tā gēge zài dàxué xué měishù.
> His older brother studies fine arts at university.

毛笔 毛筆
máobǐ writing brush

> 毛笔用完要洗干净。
> Máobǐ yòng wán yào xǐ gānjìng.
> You should wash the brush clean after using it.

颜料 顏料
yánliào paint / dye / pigment

民间 民間
mínjiān among the people / popular / folk / non-governmental / involving people rather than governments

> 奶奶会唱很多民间小调。
> Nǎinai huì chàng hěn duō mínjiān xiǎodiào.
> Grandma can sing many folk tunes.

民乐 民樂
mínyuè folk music, esp. for traditional instruments

手工艺 手工藝
shǒugōngyì handicraft / arts and crafts

> 她周末在学手工艺。
> Tā zhōumò zài xué shǒugōngyì.
> She is learning arts and crafts on weekends.

剪纸 剪紙
jiǎnzhǐ papercutting (Chinese folk art) / to make paper cutouts

> 窗上贴着红色的剪纸。
> Chuāng shàng tiēzhe hóngsè de jiǎnzhǐ.
> There is a red paper-cut pasted on the window.

戏曲 戲曲
xìqǔ Chinese opera

> 年轻人现在很少看戏曲了。
> Niánqīngrén xiànzài hěn shǎo kàn xìqǔ le.
> Young people rarely watch Chinese opera these days.

相声 相聲
xiàngsheng comic dialogue / sketch / crosstalk

> 你听得懂这段相声吗?
> Nǐ tīngdedǒng zhè duàn xiàngsheng ma?
> Can you understand this comic dialogue?

民歌
míngē folk song

> 你平时喜欢听民歌吗?
> Nǐ píngshí xǐhuan tīng míngē ma?
> Do you usually like listening to folk songs?

梅花
méihuā plum blossom / clubs ♣ (a suit in card games) / wintersweet

> 你手里还有梅花吗?
> Nǐ shǒulǐ háiyǒu méihuā ma?
> Do you still have any clubs in your hand?

兰花 蘭花
lánhuā cymbidium / orchid

> 阳台上的兰花开了。
> Yángtái shàng de lánhuā kāile.
> The orchid on the balcony has bloomed.

菊花
júhuā chrysanthemum / chrysanthemum flower / anus

> 奶奶喜欢用菊花泡茶。
> Nǎinai xǐhuan yòng júhuā pàochá.
> Grandma likes to make tea with chrysanthemums.

意象
yìxiàng image / imagery

名作
míngzuò masterpiece / famous work

松
sōng loose / to relax / pine / to loosen / surname Song / floss (dry, fluffy food product made from shredded, seasoned meat or fish, used as a topping or filling)

> 你的领带松了。
> Nǐ de lǐngdài sōngle.
> Your tie has come undone.

精美
jīngměi exquisite / elegant / fine

> 墙上挂着一幅精美的画。
> Qiáng shàng guàzhe yìfú jīngměi de huà.
> An exquisite painting hangs on the wall.

瓷器
cíqì chinaware / porcelain

> 瓷器很容易碎，请轻轻放。
> Cíqì hěn róngyì suì, qǐng qīngqīng fàng.
> Chinaware breaks easily, so please set it down gently.

灯笼 燈籠
dēnglóng lantern

> 元宵节你想不想去看灯笼?
> Yuánxiāojié nǐ xiǎng bùxiǎng qù kàn dēnglóng?
> Do you want to go see the lanterns on the Lantern Festival?

传承 傳承
chuánchéng to pass on (to future generations) / passed on (from former times) / a continued tradition / an inheritance

> 这是代代传承的老习惯。
> Zhè shì dàidài chuánchéng de lǎo xíguàn.
> This is an old habit passed down through generations.

大师 大師
dàshī great master / master
tàishī Grand Music Master / Grand Preceptor

> 他是一位著名的书法大师。
> Tā shì yí wèi zhùmíng de shūfǎ dàshī.
> He is a famous master of calligraphy.

审美 審美
shěnměi esthetics / appreciating the arts / taste

> 她没有审美感。
> Tā méiyǒu shěnměi gǎn.
> She has no sense of beauty.

绘画 繪畫
huìhuà to draw / to paint

> 她用绘画来装饰墙。
> Tā yòng huìhuà lái zhuāngshì qiáng.
> She decorated the wall with pictures.

书画 書畫
shūhuà painting and calligraphy

> 你周末想去看书画展览吗?
> Nǐ zhōumò xiǎng qù kàn shūhuà zhǎnlǎn ma?
> Do you want to go to the painting and calligraphy exhibition this weekend?

写意画 寫意畫
xiěyìhuà freehand drawing or painting in traditional Chinese style

Advanced (HSK 7-9)

太极拳 太極拳
tàijíquán shadowboxing or Taiji, T'aichi or T'aichichuan / traditional form of physical exercise or relaxation / a martial art

> 太极拳是一种中国武术。
> Tàijíquán shì yìzhǒng Zhōngguó wǔshù.
> Tai chi is a Chinese martial art.

水墨
shuǐmò ink (used in painting)

> 我外公喜欢画水墨山水。
> Wǒ wàigōng xǐhuan huà shuǐmò Shānshuǐ.
> My grandfather likes painting ink wash landscapes.

曲艺 曲藝
qǔyì folk musical theater

> 你喜欢看曲艺节目吗?
> Nǐ xǐhuan kàn qǔyì jiémù ma?
> Do you like watching folk performance shows?

墨
mò corrupt / greedy / ink stick / corporal punishment consisting of tattooing characters on the victim's forehead / China ink / surname Mo

> 这支笔没墨了。
> Zhè zhī bǐ méi mò le.
> This pen has run dry.

意境
yìjìng artistic mood or conception / creative concept

砚 硯
yàn ink-stone

笔墨 筆墨
bǐmò pen and ink / words / writing

> 她的魅力难以用笔墨形容。
> Tā de mèilì nányǐ yòng bǐmò xíngróng.
> Her charm is beyond description.

楷书 楷書
kǎishū regular script (Chinese calligraphic style)

行书 行書
xíngshū running script / semicursive script (Chinese calligraphic style)

草书 草書
cǎoshū grass script / cursive script (Chinese calligraphic style)

> 草书的线条很流畅，但是很难认。
> Cǎoshū de xiàntiáo hěn liúchàng, dànshì hěn nán rèn.
> The lines of cursive script are very flowing, but it's hard to read.

篆书 篆書
zhuànshū seal script (Chinese calligraphic style)

隶书 隸書
lìshū clerical script / official script (Chinese calligraphic style)

山水画 山水畫
shānshuǐhuà landscape painting

> 山水画里的云和山都很美。
> Shānshuǐhuà lǐ de yún hé shān dōu hěn měi.
> The clouds and mountains in the landscape painting are both beautiful.

水墨画 水墨畫
shuǐmòhuà ink and wash painting

> 水墨画为什么要留白?
> Shuǐmòhuà wèishénme yào liúbái?
> Why does ink painting leave blank space?

工笔 工筆
gōngbǐ gongbi, traditional Chinese painting method characterized by meticulous brush technique and detailed description

写意 寫意
xiěyì to suggest (rather than depict in detail) / freehand style of Chinese painting, characterized by bold strokes rather than accurate details
xièyì comfortable / enjoyable / relaxed

留白
liúbái to leave a message / to leave some empty space in a work of art / to leave idle moments (in one's life, a theater play etc)

> 水墨画为什么要留白?
> Shuǐmòhuà wèishénme yào liúbái?
> Why does ink painting leave blank space?

印章
yìnzhāng seal / signet / chop / stamp

> 请在合同上盖你的印章。
> Qǐng zài hétong shàng gài nǐ de yìnzhāng.
> Please put your seal on the contract.

字画 字畫
zìhuà the strokes of a character / calligraphy and painting

> 你会欣赏字画吗?
> Nǐ huì xīnshǎng zìhuà ma?
> Do you know how to appreciate calligraphy and paintings?

临摹 臨摹
línmó to copy (a model of calligraphy or painting etc)

真迹 真跡
zhēnjì authentic (painting or calligraphy) / genuine work (of famous artist)

题字 題字
tízì to write an inscription (poem, remark, autograph etc) / an inscription

> 画好以后，他在右上角题字。
> Huà hǎo yǐhòu, tā zài yòu shàng jiǎo tízì.
> After finishing the painting, he wrote an inscription in the upper right corner.

卷轴 卷軸
juànzhóu scroll (book or painting)

宣纸 宣紙
xuānzhǐ fine writing paper, originally from Jing county 涇縣|泾县, Xuancheng 宣城, Anhui

年画 年畫
niánhuà New Year (Spring Festival) picture

> 奶奶在门上贴了一张年画。
> Nǎinai zài ménshàng tiēle yì zhāng niánhuà.
> Grandma put a New Year picture up on the door.

变脸 變臉
biànliǎn to turn hostile suddenly / face changing, a device of Sichuan Opera, a dramatic change of attitude expressing fright, anger etc

脸谱 臉譜
liǎnpǔ types of facial makeup in operas / Facebook

> 演员正在后台画脸谱。
> Yǎnyuán zhèngzài hòutái huà liǎnpǔ.
> The actor is painting his opera face makeup backstage.

唱腔
chàngqiāng vocal music (in opera) / aria

> 京剧的唱腔我听不太懂。
> Jīngjù de chàngqiāng wǒ tīng bú tài dǒng.
> I can't quite understand the singing style of Peking opera.

行当 行當
hángdang profession / role (acting)

> 她唱的是哪个行当?
> Tā chàng de shì nǎge hángdang?
> Which role type does she play?

花旦
huādàn role of vivacious young female in Chinese opera

武生
wǔshēng male military role in a Chinese opera

票友
piàoyǒu an amateur actor (e.g. in Chinese opera)

二胡
èrhú erhu (Chinese 2-string fiddle) / alto fiddle

古筝 古箏
gǔzhēng guzheng (large zither with 13 to 25 strings, developed from the guqin 古琴[gu3 qin2] during Tang and Song times)

琵琶
pípa pipa, Chinese lute, with 4 strings, a large pear-shaped body and a fretted fingerboard

笛子
dízi bamboo flute

> 你想学笛子还是学钢琴?
> Nǐ xiǎng xué dízi háishi xué gāngqín?
> Do you want to learn the flute or the piano?

琴棋书画 琴棋書畫
qínqíshūhuà the four arts of the Chinese scholar (guqin, Go, calligraphy and painting) / (by extension) the accomplishments of a well-educated person

> 你会琴棋书画中的哪一样?
> Nǐ huì qínqíshūhuà zhōng de nǎ yíyàng?
> Which of the four classical arts can you do?

莲花 蓮花
liánhuā lotus flower (Nelumbo nucifera Gaertn, among others) / water-lily

含蓄
hánxù to contain / to hold / reserved / restrained / full of hidden meaning / implicit / veiled (criticism)

> 她说话很含蓄。
> Tā shuōhuà hěn hánxù.
> She is very reserved in how she speaks.

典雅
diǎnyǎ refined / elegant

古朴 古樸
gǔpǔ simple and unadorned (of art, architecture etc)

> 古朴的小村子里很安静。
> Gǔpiáo de xiǎo cūnzi lǐ hěn ānjìng.
> It is very quiet in the plain, old-fashioned little village.

精湛
jīngzhàn consummate / exquisite

> 这件玉雕的工艺非常精湛。
> Zhè jiàn Yùdiāo de gōngyì fēicháng jīngzhàn.
> The craftsmanship of this jade carving is exquisite.

陶瓷
táocí pottery and porcelain / ceramics

> 这家店卖的陶瓷很漂亮。
> Zhè jiā diàn mài de táocí hěn piàoliang.
> The pottery and porcelain sold in this shop is very beautiful.

刺绣 刺繡
cìxiù to embroider / embroidery

> 她正坐在窗边刺绣。
> Tā zhèngzuò zài chuāng biān cìxiù.
> She is sitting by the window embroidering.

丝绸 絲綢
sīchóu silk (cloth)

> 丝绸摸起来又软又滑。
> Sīchóu mō qǐlai yòu ruǎn yòu huá.
> Silk feels soft and smooth to the touch.

雕刻
diāokè to carve / to engrave / carving

> 能在杯子上雕刻几个字吗?
> Néng zài bēizi shàng diāokè jǐ ge zì ma?
> Can you engrave a few words on this cup?

风筝 風箏
fēngzheng kite (lit. "wind zither", traditionally explained as being named after kites fitted with bamboo whistles that produced musical sounds when flown)

> 他擅长放风筝。
> Tā shàncháng fàng fēngzheng.
> He's good at flying kites.

中国结 中國結
zhōngguójié traditional Chinese decorative knot

工匠
gōngjiàng artisan / smith

> 好的工匠为自己的作品感到骄傲。
> Hǎo de gōngjiàng wèi zìjǐ de zuòpǐn gǎndào jiāo'ào.
> A good craftsman takes pride in his work.

秧歌
yāngge Yangge, a popular rural folk dance

> 你看过北方的秧歌表演吗?
> Nǐ kànguo běifāng de yāngge biǎoyǎn ma?
> Have you ever seen a yangge performance in the north?

Advanced (HSK 7-9), part 2

名家
míngjiā renowned expert / master (of an art or craft) / School of Logicians of the Warring States Period (475-220 BC), also called the School of Names

> 名家很爱讨论逻辑问题。
> Míngjiā hěn ài tǎolùn luóji wèntí.
> The School of Names loved to discuss questions of logic.

绣 繡
xiù to embroider / embroidery

> 她绣的花样精妙极了。
> Tā xiù de huāyàng jīngmiào jíle.
> The patterns she embroidered are absolutely exquisite.

窑 窯
yáo kiln / brothel / coal pit / cave dwelling / oven

> 工人正在往窑里放砖。
> Gōngrén zhèngzài wǎng yáo lǐ fàng zhuān.
> The workers are putting bricks into the kiln.

壁画 壁畫
bìhuà mural (painting) / fresco

> 莫高窟的壁画非常精美。
> Mògāokū de bìhuà fēicháng jīngměi.
> The murals in the Mogao Caves are exquisite.

流派
liúpài tributary (stream) / school (of thought) / genre / style

> 你最喜欢哪个音乐流派?
> Nǐ zuì xǐhuan nǎge yīnyuè liúpài?
> Which music genre do you like best?

剧目 劇目
jùmù theatrical piece (play or opera) / repertoire / list of plays or operas

> 海报上写着这个月的剧目。
> Hǎibào shàng xiězhe zhège yuè de jùmù.
> The poster lists this month's programme of plays.

手艺 手藝
shǒuyì craftmanship / workmanship / handicraft / trade

> 师傅对手艺精益求精。
> Shīfu duì shǒuyì jīngyìqiújīng.
> The master keeps refining his craft.

对联 對聯
duìlián rhyming couplet / pair of lines of verse written vertically down the sides of a doorway

> 这副对联对得很工整。
> Zhè fù duìlián duì de hěn gōngzhěng.
> The two lines of this couplet match each other very neatly.

丹青
dānqīng painting / historical records / annals

笔法 筆法
bǐfǎ technique of writing, calligraphy or drawing

> 山水画的笔法跟人物画不一样。
> Shānshuǐhuà de bǐfǎ gēn rénwùhuà bù yíyàng.
> The brush technique for landscape painting differs from that for figure painting.

笔触 筆觸
bǐchù brush stroke in Chinese painting and calligraphy / brushwork / style of drawing or writing

叫板
jiàobǎn to signal the musicians (in Chinese opera, by prolonging a spoken word before attacking a song) / to challenge

> 他居然敢跟老板叫板。
> Tā jūrán gǎn gēn lǎobǎn jiàobǎn.
> He actually dares to challenge the boss.

绝活 絕活
juéhuó specialty / unique skill
> 剪纸是奶奶的绝活。
> Jiǎnzhǐ shì nǎinai de juéhuó.
> Paper cutting is my grandmother's specialty.

墨宝 墨寶
mòbǎo treasured work of calligraphy or painting / polite term for another person's calligraphy or painting
> 能不能请您留下一幅墨宝?
> Néng bùnéng qǐng nín liúxià yìfú mòbǎo?
> Could I trouble you to leave us a piece of your calligraphy?

苏绣 蘇繡
sūxiù Suzhou embroidery, one of the four major traditional styles of Chinese embroidery (the other three being 湘繡|湘绣[Xiang1 xiu4], 粵繡|粵绣[Yue4 xiu4] and 蜀繡|蜀绣[Shu3 xiu4])
> 她从小跟着外婆学苏绣。
> Tā cóngxiǎo gēnzhe wàipó xué Sūxiù.
> She has been learning Suzhou embroidery from her grandmother since she was little.

Outside HSK

文房四宝 文房四寶
wénfángsìbǎo Four Treasures of the Study, namely 筆|笔[bi3], 墨[mo4], 紙|纸[zhi3] and 硯|砚[yan4] / the essentials of calligraphy and scholarship (idiom)

篆刻
zhuànkè to carve a seal / a seal

昆曲 崑曲
kūnqǔ Kunqu opera, influential musical theater originating in Kunshan, Jiangsu province in Yuan times
> 昆曲的唱腔特别优美。
> Kūnqǔ de chàngqiāng tèbié yōuměi.
> The singing style of Kunqu opera is especially beautiful.

越剧 越劇
yuèjù Shaoxing opera

豫剧 豫劇
yùjù Henan opera

川剧 川劇
chuānjù Sichuan opera

戏台 戲臺
xìtái stage
> 演员们正在戏台上准备表演。
> Yǎnyuánmen zhèngzài xìtái shàng zhǔnbèi biǎoyǎn.
> The actors are getting ready to perform on the stage.

皮影戏 皮影戲
píyǐngxì shadow play

木偶戏 木偶戲
mù'ǒuxì puppet show
> 这场木偶戏几点开始?
> Zhè chǎng mù'ǒuxì jǐdiǎn kāishǐ?
> What time does this puppet show start?

评书 評書
píngshū pingshu, a folk art where a single performer narrates stories from history or fiction
> 评书是很多听众喜闻乐见的形式。
> Píngshū shì hěn duō tīngzhòng xǐwénlèjiàn de xíngshì.
> Storytelling is a form that many listeners love.

快板
kuàibǎn allegro

古琴
gǔqín guqin or qin, a long zither with seven strings, plucked with the fingers
> 她从小就跟老师学古琴。
> Tā cóngxiǎo jiù gēn lǎoshī xué gǔqín.
> She has studied the guqin with a teacher since she was little.

唢呐 嗩吶
suǒnà suona, Chinese shawm (oboe), used in festivals and processions or for military purposes / also called 喇叭[la3 ba5]

气韵 氣韻
qìyùn distinct style / flavor / spirit / character

神韵 神韻
shényùn charm or grace (in poetry or art)

高洁 高潔
gāojié noble and clean-living / lofty and unsullied

风骨 風骨
fēnggǔ strength of character / vigorous style (of calligraphy)

淡雅
dànyǎ simple and elegant

青花瓷
qīnghuācí blue and white porcelain

漆器
qīqì lacquerware

玉器
yùqì jade artifact

泥塑
nísù clay modeling / clay figurine or statue

面塑 麵塑
miànsù made of dough / dough modeling

非物质文化遗产 非物質文化遺產
fēiwùzhìwénhuàyíchǎn intangible cultural heritage
> 京剧也是非物质文化遗产。
> Jīngjù yě shì fēiwùzhìwénhuàyíchǎn.
> Peking opera is also intangible cultural heritage.

舞狮 舞獅
wǔshī lion dance (traditional Chinese dance form)

国粹 國粹
guócuì national essence / quintessence of national culture

意蕴 意蘊
yìyùn inner meaning / implication / connotation

景泰蓝 景泰藍
jǐngtàilán cloisonne / cloisonné

折子戏 折子戲
zhézixì opera highlights performed as independent pieces

> 这段折子戏我爷爷最爱听。
> Zhè duàn zhézixì wǒ yéye zuì ài tīng.
> My grandfather loves listening to this opera excerpt most.