CHINESE BOOST

Traditions and customs Chinese vocabulary list

102 words with pinyin, 繁體 and meanings, 79 of them with an example sentence.
Every word here links to its entry on the site.

Parts 1 2 3 4

Traditions and customs 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)

生日
shēngrì birthday

> 今天是我生日。
> Jīntiān shì wǒ shēngrì.
> Today is my birthday.

习惯 習慣
xíguàn to be used to / habit / custom / usual practice

> 你会习惯的。
> Nǐ huì xíguàn de.
> You'll get used to it.

结婚 結婚
jiéhūn to marry / to get married

> 他们结婚了。
> Tāmen jiéhūnle.
> They got married.

南方
nánfāng south / southern direction / southern regions, often referring to areas south of the Yangtze River

> 他飞到南方。
> Tā fēi dào nánfāng.
> He took off to the south.

北方
běifāng north / the northern part a country / China north of the Yellow River

> 北方的立夏还不太热吧?
> Běifāng de Lìxià hái bú tài rè ba?
> It's not very hot yet in the north at Lixia, is it?

不同
bùtóng different / distinct / not the same / not alike

> 每个人都是不同的。
> Měige rén dōu shì bùtóng de.
> Each individual is different.

文化
wénhuà culture / cultural / civilization

> 电脑文化是好是坏?
> Diànnǎo wénhuà shì hǎo shì huài?
> Is PC culture good or bad?

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?

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.

国粹 國粹
guócuì national essence / quintessence of national culture

礼貌 禮貌
lǐmào courteous / polite / courtesy / politeness / manners

> 你不讲礼貌。
> Nǐ bù jiǎng lǐmào.
> You have no manners.

红包 紅包
hóngbāo money wrapped in red as a gift / bonus payment / kickback / bribe

> 老板赏了他一个红包。
> Lǎobǎn shǎngle tā yí gè hóngbāo.
> The boss gave him a red envelope as a reward.

风俗 風俗
fēngsú social custom

> 这是我们老家的风俗。
> Zhè shì wǒmen lǎojiā de fēngsú.
> This is a custom from our hometown.

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.

婚礼 婚禮

hūnlǐ wedding ceremony / wedding

> 婚礼在哪儿举行?
> Hūnlǐ zài nǎr jǔxíng?
> Where is the wedding to be?

新郎

xīnláng bridegroom / groom

> 你见过新郎的父母吗?
> Nǐ jiànguo xīnláng de fùmǔ ma?
> Have you met the groom's parents?

新娘

xīnniáng bride

> 新娘好像非常漂亮。
> Xīnniáng hǎoxiàng fēicháng piàoliang.
> The bride seems to be very pretty.

去世

qùshì to pass away / to die

> 54岁去世。
> Wǔshísì suì qùshì.
> He died aged 54 years.

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.

中医 中醫

zhōngyī traditional Chinese medical science / a doctor trained in Chinese medicine

> 中医有几千年的历史。
> Zhōngyī yǒu jǐqiān nián de lìshǐ.
> Traditional Chinese medicine has a history of several thousand years.

书法 書法

shūfǎ calligraphy / handwriting / penmanship

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

生肖

shēngxiào one of the twelve animals symbolic of the earthly branches 地支[di4 zhi1] / animal from the Chinese zodiac

> 我奶奶的生肖是马。
> Wǒ nǎinai de shēngxiào shì mǎ.
> My grandmother's zodiac animal is the horse.

习俗 習俗

xísú custom / tradition / local tradition / convention

> 不同的国家有不同的习俗。
> Bùtóng de guójiā yǒu bùtóng de xísú.
> Each country has its own customs.

婚姻

hūnyīn marriage / matrimony

> 有些人害怕婚姻。
> Yǒuxiē rén hàipà hūnyīn.
> Marriage frightens some people.

祝福

zhùfú blessings / to wish sb well

> 谢谢你的祝福。
> Xièxie nǐ de zhùfú.
> Thanks for your well-wishes.

民俗

mínsú popular custom

> 你对中国的民俗有兴趣吗?
> Nǐ duì Zhōngguó de mínsú yǒu xìngqù ma?
> Are you interested in Chinese folk customs?

订婚 訂婚

dìnghūn to get engaged

> 我跟她订婚了。
> Wǒ gēn tā dìnghūnle.
> I am engaged to her.

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.

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.

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.

喜事

xǐshì happy occasion / wedding

> 他们下个月办喜事。
> Tāmen xiàgeyuè bàn xǐshì.
> They are getting married next month.

吉祥

jíxiáng lucky / auspicious / propitious

> 红色在中国是吉祥的颜色。
> Hóngsè zài Zhōngguó shì jíxiáng de yánsè.
> Red is a lucky color in China.

仪式 儀式

yíshì ceremony

> 仪式完成了。
> Yíshì wánchéngle.
> The ritual was completed.

典礼 典禮
diǎnlǐ ceremony / celebration

> 明天举行典礼。
> Míngtiān jǔxíng diǎnlǐ.
> The ceremony will take place tomorrow.

求婚
qiúhūn to propose marriage

> 他向你求婚了吗?
> Tā xiàng nǐ qiúhūnle ma?
> Did he propose to you?

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.

禁忌
jìnjì taboo / contraindication (medicine) / to abstain from

> 在这里谈钱是一种禁忌。
> Zài zhèlǐ tán qián shì yìzhǒng jìnjì.
> Talking about money here is a taboo.

礼仪 禮儀
lǐyí etiquette / ceremony

> 她没有一点礼仪。
> Tā méiyǒu yìdiǎn lǐyí.
> She has no manners at all.

葬礼 葬禮
zànglǐ burial / funeral

> 葬礼是昨天。
> Zànglǐ shì zuótiān.
> The funeral was yesterday.

迷信
míxìn superstition / to have a superstitious belief (in sth)

> 考试前，你别太迷信运气。
> Kǎoshì qián, nǐ bié tài míxìn yùnqi.
> Before the exam, don't put too much faith in luck.

忌讳 忌諱
jìhuì taboo / to avoid as taboo / to abstain from

> 他忌讳别人问他的年龄。
> Tā jìhuì biéren wèn tā de niánlíng.
> He doesn't like people asking his age.

嫁妆 嫁妝
jiàzhuang dowry

> 嫁妆里有一对金耳环。
> Jiàzhuang lǐ yǒu yíduì jīn ěrhuán.
> The dowry includes a pair of gold earrings.

彩礼 彩禮
cǎilǐ betrothal gift / bride price

出嫁
chūjià to get married (of woman)

> 女儿出嫁时，妈妈哭了。
> Nǚ'ér chūjià shí, māma kūle.
> When her daughter got married, the mother cried.

迎亲 迎親
yíngqīn to send a bridal sedan chair 花轎|花轿 to fetch the bride / to send a party to escort the bride to the groom's house

> 迎亲的车队什么时候到?
> Yíngqīn de chēduì shénme shíhou dào?
> When will the motorcade to fetch the bride arrive?

拜堂
bàitáng ritual kneeling to heaven and earth by bride and groom in a old-fashioned wedding ceremony / same as 拜天地

洞房
dòngfáng secret inner room / bridal room

媒人
méiren matchmaker

喜糖
xǐtáng sweet given on a happy occasion (esp. wedding)

> 你什么时候请我们吃喜糖?
> Nǐ shénme shíhou qǐng wǒmen chī xǐtáng?
> When are you going to treat us to your wedding candy?

喜酒
xǐjiǔ wedding feast / liquor drunk at a wedding feast

> 下个月请你来喝我的喜酒。
> Xiàgeyuè qǐng nǐ lái hē wǒ de xǐjiǔ.
> Please come to my wedding feast next month.

满月 滿月
mǎnyuè to reach one month of age / to reach the one-month mark since the start, launch or implementation of sth / the full moon

> 他喜欢在满月下散步。
> Tā xǐhuan zài mǎnyuè xià sànbù.
> He likes to take walks under the full moon.

周岁 週歲
zhōusuì one full year (e.g. on child's first birthday)

> 你儿子满周岁了吗?
> Nǐ érzi mǎn zhōusuì le ma?
> Has your son turned one yet?

丧事 喪事
sāngshì funeral arrangements

墓地
mùdì cemetery / graveyard

> 老人在村子后面买了一块墓地。
> Lǎorén zài cūnzi hòumian mǎile yíkuài mùdì.
> The old man bought a plot in the graveyard behind the village.

哀悼
āidào to grieve over sb's death / to lament sb's death / mourning

遗体 遺體

yítǐ remains (of a dead person)

> 家人明天上午去看他的遗体。
> Jiārén míngtiān shàngwǔ qù kàn tā de yítǐ.
> His family will go to see his remains tomorrow morning.

火葬

huǒzàng to cremate

> 城里人大多选择火葬。
> Chénglǐrén dàduō xuǎnzé huǒzàng.
> Most city people choose cremation.

祭祀

jìsì to offer sacrifices to the gods or ancestors

> 古代的人常常祭祀天地。
> Gǔdài de rén chángcháng jìsì tiāndì.
> People in ancient times often offered sacrifices to heaven and earth.

扫墓 掃墓

sǎomù to sweep a grave (and pay one's respects to the dead person)

> 你明天有空陪我去扫墓吗?
> Nǐ míngtiān yǒukòng péi wǒ qù sǎomù ma?
> Are you free tomorrow to go with me to visit the grave?

风水 風水

fēngshuǐ feng shui / geomancy

> 这间房子的风水很好。
> Zhè jiān fángzi de fēngshuǐ hěn hǎo.
> The feng shui of this house is very good.

风土人情 風土人情

fēngtǔrénqíng local conditions and customs (idiom)

> 我想了解当地的风土人情。
> Wǒ xiǎng liǎojiě dāngdì de fēngtǔrénqíng.
> I want to learn about the local customs and way of life.

吉利

jílì auspicious / lucky / propitious / Geely, Chinese car make

> 八是个吉利的数字。
> Bā shì gè Jílì de shùzì.
> Eight is a lucky number.

鞠躬

jūgōng to bow / to bend down

> 我向老师鞠躬，表示敬意。
> Wǒ xiàng lǎoshī jūgōng, biǎoshì jìngyì.
> I bowed to my teacher to show my respect.

磕头 磕頭

kētóu to kowtow (traditional greeting, esp. to a superior, involving kneeling and pressing one's forehead to the ground)

> 在老家，结婚要给父母磕头。
> Zài lǎojiā, jiéhūn yào gěi fùmǔ kētóu.
> In my hometown, you kowtow to your parents when you marry.

和尚

héshang Buddhist monk

> 古时候有和尚去印度取经。
> Gǔshíhou yǒu héshang qù Yìndù qǔjīng.
> In ancient times, monks went to India to seek Buddhist scriptures.

葬

zàng to bury (the dead) / to inter

> 他死后被葬在山脚下。
> Tā sǐ hòu bèi zàng zài shān jiǎoxià.
> After he died, he was buried at the foot of the mountain.

棺材

guāncai coffin

> 电影里的棺材突然打开了!
> Diànyǐng lǐ de guāncai tūrán dǎkāile!
> The coffin in the movie suddenly opened!

菩萨 菩薩

púsà bodhisattva

> 她求菩萨保佑全家平安。
> Tā qiú púsà bǎoyòu quánjiā píng'ān.
> She prayed to the bodhisattva to keep her whole family safe.

逝世

shìshì to pass away / to die

> 他昨天逝世了。
> Tā zuótiān shìshìle.
> He died yesterday.

供奉

gòngfèng to consecrate / to enshrine and worship / an offering (to one's ancestors) / a sacrifice (to a god)

> 古时候人们用牛羊作供奉。
> Gǔshíhou rénmen yòng niúyáng zuò gòngfèng.
> In ancient times, people used cattle and sheep as sacrifices.

坟墓 墳墓

fénmù grave / tomb

> 这是谁的坟墓?
> Zhè shì shéi de fénmù?
> Whose tomb is this?

祈祷 祈禱

qídǎo to pray / to say a prayer

> 思念又祈祷。
> Sīniàn yòu qídǎo.
> Thoughts and prayers.

占卜

zhānbǔ to divine

> 老奶奶会用纸牌占卜。
> Lǎonǎinai huì yòng zhǐpái zhānbǔ.
> The old lady can tell fortunes with cards.

女方

nǚfāng the bride's side (of a wedding) / of the bride's party

> 女方的客人都坐在左边。
> Nǚfāng de kèrén dōu zuò zài zuǒbian.
> The bride's guests are all seated on the left.

男方
nánfāng the bridegroom's side / the husband's side

> 婚礼的钱主要由男方出。
> Hūnlǐ de qián zhǔyào yóu nánfāng chū.
> The money for the wedding is mainly paid by the groom's side.

蜜月
mìyuè honeymoon

> 去加拿大渡蜜月要花很多钱。
> Qù Jiānádà dù mìyuè yào huā hěn duō qián.
> A honeymoon in Canada costs a lot of money.

祭奠
jìdiàn to offer sacrifices (to one's ancestors) / to hold or attend a memorial service

> 奶奶每年都会在家门口祭奠爷爷。
> Nǎinai měinián dōu huì zàijiā ménkǒu jìdiàn yéye.
> Every year, Grandma makes offerings to Grandpa at the front door.

庙会 廟會
miàohuì temple fair

> 你小时候去过庙会吗?
> Nǐ xiǎoshíhou qùguo miàohuì ma?
> Did you go to temple fairs when you were little?

许愿 許願
xǔyuàn to make a wish / to make a vow / to promise a reward

> 生日时，她闭上眼睛许愿。
> Shēngrì shí, tā bì shang yǎnjing xǔyuàn.
> On her birthday, she closed her eyes and made a wish.

属相 屬相
shǔxiàng colloquial term for 生肖[sheng1 xiao4] the animals associated with the years of a 12-year cycle

> 我和奶奶的属相一样。
> Wǒ hé nǎinai de shǔxiàng yíyàng.
> My grandmother and I have the same zodiac animal.

Outside HSK

花轿 花轎
huājiào bridal sedan chair

抓周
zhuāzhōu custom of placing a variety of articles (writing brush, abacus etc) before an infant on its first birthday to see which one he or she picks up (The article chosen is supposed to be an indication of the child's inclinations, future career etc.)

> 抓周时，孩子会选什么呢?
> Zhuāzhōu shí, háizi huì xuǎn shénme ne?
> At the zhuazhou, what will the child pick?

寿星 壽星
shòuxīng elderly person whose birthday is being celebrated / Canopus (brightest star in the constellation Carina 船底座 [Chuan2 di3 zuo4]) / Longevity Star / God of Longevity

祝寿 祝壽
zhùshòu to offer birthday congratulations (to an elderly person)

殡葬 殯葬
bìnzàng funeral and interment

灵柩 靈柩
língjiù coffin containing a corpse

守灵 守靈
shǒulíng to keep watch beside a coffin

> 家人要在灵堂守灵三夜。
> Jiārén yào zài língtáng shǒulíng sān yè.
> The family has to keep vigil by the coffin in the mourning hall for three nights.

吊唁
diàoyàn to offer condolences (for the deceased) / to condole

土葬
tǔzàng burial (in earth)

> 土葬和火葬有什么不同?
> Tǔzàng hé huǒzàng yǒu shénme bùtóng?
> What's the difference between burial and cremation?

祭祖
jìzǔ to offer sacrifices to one's ancestors

孝服
xiàofú mourning clothes

入乡随俗 入鄉隨俗
rùxiāngsuísú when in Rome, do as the Romans do

> 住在这里就得入乡随俗啊。
> Zhù zài zhèlǐ jiù de rùxiāngsuísú a.
> If you live here, you have to follow the local customs.

辟邪
bìxié to ward off evil spirits / mythical lion-like animal that wards off evil (also called 貔貅[pi2 xiu1])
pìxié depraved / improper

择日 擇日
zérì to fix a date (for an event) / to select an auspicious date

出殡 出殯
chūbìn to accompany a deceased person to his last resting place / to hold a funeral

回门 回門
huímén first return of bride to her parental home

> 回门该带什么礼物?
> Huímén gāi dài shénme lǐwù?
> What gifts should we bring for the bride's first visit back home?

守孝
shǒuxiào to observe mourning for one's parents

寿桃 壽桃
shòutáo peaches of immortality, kept by Xi Wangmu / fresh or confectionery peaches offered as a birthday gift

寿面 壽麵
shòumiàn birthday noodles (for longevity)

白事
báishì funeral / to explain (literary)

风水先生 風水先生

fēngshuǐxiānsheng feng shui master / geomancer / stock figure in folk tales, as a wise adviser or a charlatan

> 民间故事里有个风水先生。
> Mínjiāngùshi lǐ yǒu gè fēngshuǐxiānsheng.
> There is a feng shui master in the folk tale.

冥币 冥幣

míngbì false paper money burned as an offering to the dead