Chinese Characters First Steps App – The Open University

Description

Learning to read and write Chinese characters presents two challenges to both non-native learners as well as Chinese children who first start learning characters: i) the complexity of characters, as an average character consists of about 12 strokes; ii) matching characters with their pronunciation, pinyin and meaning. This new version of Chinese Characters First Steps tackles these two challenges on one screen to help you learn, recognize and remember the most frequently used 400 plus characters in a systematic, friendly and fun way. Rather than having a textbook, audio device, dictionary and a notebook to write, you get the stroke-by-stroke writing, the native-speaker pronunciation, pinyin, English definition and instructions in one interactive experience.

These 400 plus characters are introduced in the Open University's Beginners' Chinese module 第一步 Dì yī bù (L197) [1] which are drawn from the most commonly and frequently used word list published by the Ministry of Education of PRC (China). By combining them, you will learn a further 300+ useful words and phrases. For example, you learn the three single-character words for 'red' (红 hóng), 'green' (绿 lǜ) and 'light' (灯 dēng), which put together make up the word 'traffic lights', which you will find in the word search puzzle. So once you've learned the initial 400 characters, there's a lot you can do with them.

There are 20 lessons which chronologically build upon each other. The first lesson with 20 characters and related activities is for free download to give you a taste of what this app can do. The other 19 lessons are available via in-app purchase by tapping the 'upgrade' button.

To download, go to App Store, search for 'Chinese Characters First Steps'. If you already have OU's first edition of this App (released last year), delete it from your device first before you download this latest edition. This App can be downloaded to iPhone/iPad/iPod touch.

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[1] L197 Beginners' Chinese is an adaptation of Chinese in Steps by George. X. Zhang, Linda M. Li and Lik Suen, published by Cypress Book Co. (UK) Ltd.
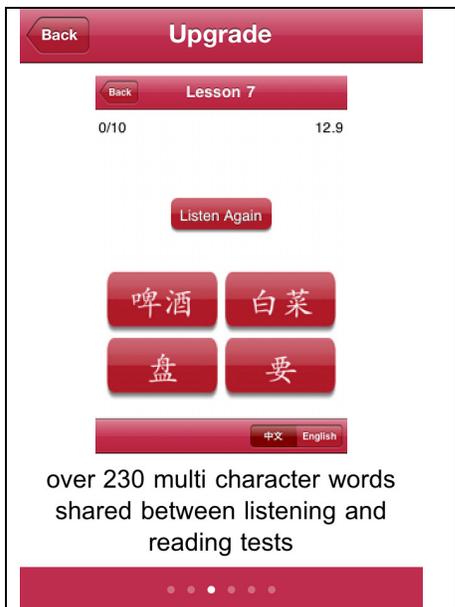
Lesson features:

Each lesson comprises four sections

(1) Writing Practice

Back **xué (to learn)** Reset 学	Here you are presented with about 20 characters that you can learn to draw using the correct stroke order, which is essential in assisting you to memorise Chinese characters. Once a character is drawn, the correct pronunciation by a native Chinese speaker is played to aid your learning of the selected character. You can choose to reset the character to have another go, listen again to the pronunciation or move to the next character in the character list. As you complete each character a count is kept to allow you to see how many times you have practised it.

You can change the difficulty settings in this section to test your skill at writing Chinese characters. The default setting is 'easy' with the arrow indicating the stroke order.

(2) Listening Test

Back   **Upgrade**
 	
Back   Lesson 7
0/10   12.9
 	
Listen Again
 	
啤酒   白菜
盘   要
 	
中文   English
 	
over 230 multi character words shared between listening and reading tests
	This part of the application presents you with the opportunity to test yourself on understanding:
	    i) the characters you have just learnt in the lesson;
	    ii) two-character words which are made up of characters you have learnt.
	The test consists of 10 randomly chosen words or phrases. You will hear a word or phrase and you must select the correct answer from the choices displayed. Answer correctly and the screen will flash green, answer incorrectly and the screen flashes red. As you answer the next word or phrase will be played automatically. The text on the buttons can be toggled between displaying the Chinese character or English. A counter displays how many you have answered correctly. This exercise is timed, so be quick!

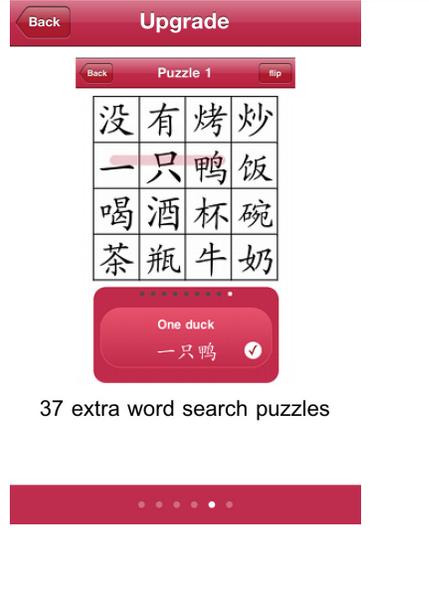The timer can be changed via the Settings menu in the Writing Practice section.

(3) Reading Test

This part of the application presents you with the opportunity to test yourself on recognising:

i)   the characters you have learnt in the lesson;

ii)   two-character words which are made up of characters you have learnt.

The test consists of 10 randomly chosen words or phrases. You will see a word or phrase and you must select the correct answer from the choices displayed. Answer correctly and the screen will flash green, answer incorrectly and the screen flashes red. As you answer the next word or phrase will be played automatically. The text on the buttons can be toggled between displaying English or Pinyin. A counter displays how many you have answered correctly. This exercise is timed, so be quick!

The timer can be changed via the Settings menu in the Writing Practice section.

(4) Word Search

Here you are presented with a word search puzzle of characters that you have learned in the Writing Practice section of a particular lesson and from previous lessons.

The scrollable tablets at the bottom of the screen display the English words or phrases that you need to find in the grid. Tap the tablet to display the Pinyin of the word or phrase. On the grid, drag your finger either horizontally from left to right or vertically from top to bottom where you think the correct answer is.

As you trace your finger, a line will be drawn showing your selection. If it matches the words or phrases in the list, the pink line will remain on the grid and the tablet view will automatically scroll to the right answer displaying both the Chinese characters and a tick. The correct pronunciation of the found word or phrase is automatically played too.