Differentiating Similar Characters

Many characters bear resemblances to each other. This can make it difficult to recognize the right word.

Let’s look at some examples of characters that are quite similar to each other.

买 (mǎi) “to buy” and 卖 (mài) “to sell”

These characters not only share a resemblance, but the tone is similar enough to cause problems as well. The difference is in the “hat” above the bulk of the character.

未 (wèi) “did not,” “have not” 末 (mò) end, tip 夫 (fū) husband, ordinary

These characters share minor distinctions that can be confusing. First, you need to see whether or not they have a line coming through the middle, then you need to look at the length on each horizontal bar. In handwriting this may be easier to see, but typed on a computer it makes it even harder to distinguish.

力 (lì) “power,” 九 (jiǔ) “nine,” 刀 (dāo) “knife”

Look at the subtle differences with these characters. See how the tips bend and whether or not the other lines extend through the character or not. As you can see, the little differences can change the meaning. Now you know why Chinese students must spend hours upon hours perfecting their character handwriting.

太 (tài) “too,” 大 (dà) “big,” 不 (bù) “no,” 人 (rén) “person”

These characters are all simple enough, but sometimes can confuse readers. Notice how one tiny dot or stroke can change a meaning, or if you are writing “big” and forget one stroke, you’ve just said “a person.”

Reading & Listening: Names, Numbers and Addresses
你叫什么名字？
nǐ jiào shén me míng zì
What is your name?

我叫小雨
wǒ jiào xiǎo yǔ
My name is Xiao Yu.

您贵姓？
nín guì xìng
What is your honorable last name?

我姓王。我叫王凯静。
wǒ xìng wáng wǒ jiào wáng kǎi jìng
My family name is Wang. I am called Wang Kai Jing. (My name is Wang Kai Jing.)

你的电话号码是多少？
nǐ de diàn huà hào mǎ shì duō shǎo
Wha is your phone number?

我的电话号码是:
wǒ de diàn huà hào mǎ shì
My phone number is:
一 三 二 九 九 七 五 八 六 三 八
yī sān èr jiǔ jiǔ qī wǔ bā liù sān bā
1 3 2 9 9 7 5 8 6 3 8
(You will say the individual number when it mentions about the phone number. There is no thousand, hundred and ten in phone number.)

For example: My phone number is 404-290-1664.

我的电话号码是
wǒ de diàn huà hào mǎ shì
My phone number is
四 零 四 二 九 零 一 六 六 四。
sì líng sì èr jiǔ líng yī liù liù sì
4 0 4 2 9 0 1 6 6 4

你住哪里？
nǐ de jiā zhù nǎ lǐ nǎ ěr
Where do you live?
我住在北京。
I live in Beijing.

我的地址是
My address is

朝阳区中山东路四百八十号。
No. 480 Zhong Shan Road in Zhao Yang district.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicate the best translation for the term you hear:</th>
<th>stroke order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the best translation for the term you hear:</td>
<td>Chinese characters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most Chinese characters are between what range of strokes?</td>
<td>three to 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of the following characters means &quot;to buy&quot;?</td>
<td>买</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When learning Chinese characters, students must spend a lot of time doing what?</td>
<td>写汉字</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many strokes are in the character 大？</td>
<td>three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicate the best character transcription for the term you hear:</td>
<td>大陆</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which of these characters below is pronounced 太？</td>
<td>太</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True or False:</td>
<td>false</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**People in 中国大陆 usually speak 简体字.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True or False:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficult or more complex Chinese characters mean deeper things that have to do with philosophy and religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I write a character on the 左边, where did I write?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True or False:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你叫什么名字? asks a question, how are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>我住在北京 is a response to which question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I say, &quot;我的电话号码是：一三九九七五八六三八,&quot; I am responding to what question?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill in the blank:</td>
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<td></td>
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