

Scripts

Five basic scripts have emerged over 2000 years: Calligraphers design each character to fit into an imaginary square—whether it is composed of one or sixty-four strokes. Writers must create each stroke of a character in a particular order, essentially from left to right and from top to bottom.

The evolution of the Chinese character dragon (<i>long</i>) in various script types:		
 Oracle-bone	 Seal	 Clerical
 Cursive	 Semi-cursive	 Standard

There are five basic scripts regularly used in Chinese calligraphy:

Seal script (Chinese: *zhuanshu*)

These careful, straight lines are related to the earliest forms of Chinese writing.

Clerical script (*lishu*)

More angled strokes allowed clerks to write official documents more easily and quickly.

Standard or regular script (*kaishu*)

This clear and easy to read script is commonly used in printed books and signs today.

Semi-cursive script (*xingshu*; “running script”)

Strokes tend to run together within each character, but the artist usually lifts the brush between each character.

Cursive script (*caoshu*; “grass script”)

In this free and spontaneous script, artists may get away with abbreviating and abstracting the characters. Characters may run together.