

Introduction to the Garden Learning Activities



DR. SUN YAT-SEN
CLASSICAL
CHINESE
GARDEN

The Four Arts 琴棋書畫

Learning Activities - The Four Arts

Welcome to the Dr Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden!

Our Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver was the first real, full size Chinese garden built outside of China. It opened in 1986.

It is modelled on Ming Dynasty scholars' gardens in the city of Suzhou in China. This is a garden home, where a Scholar and his family plus his servants would have lived during the Ming Dynasty era (1368 – 1644).

Scholars used their gardens as a place to escape the busy world. They created beautiful spaces to paint, write calligraphy, compose poetry and meditate.

A Scholar is a man who would have studied the Chinese classics, art and literature to a very high level in order to in prepare for the civil service (Government) examinations. If he passed the final examination, he entered government service as an official at the highest level.

The Four Arts were the most important things a Scholar needed to know. They were:

琴 playing a musical instrument called a Guqin

棋 playing a board game called Weiqi ('Go' in English)

書 calligraphy (the art form of writing Chinese characters)

畫 brush painting.

The Scholar would have studied and been very good at all of these art forms.

Find out more about the Four Arts with these learning activities. Next time you visit our Garden, you can imagine yourself to be a highly educated Scholar, enjoying his home and garden!

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Learning Activities - The Four Arts

Qin 琴 (Traditional Musical Instrument)

The next time you visit our Garden, make your way to the Scholar's Study. This is the room in which the Scholar, the man who lived in a house like this with his family, might have spent his time practicing the 'Four Arts'.

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Elegant Pursuits of the Literati: "The Eighteen Scholars" by an Anonymous Ming Artist (2012 exhibit). Taipei: National Palace Museum.

This picture shows a Scholar in the Ming Dynasty period (1368 – 1644) getting ready to play the guqin for his friends. A servant is taking the instrument out of its case while the Scholar and his friends wait.

In ancient China, a Scholar would be expected to be proficient in the guqin. This instrument has a long history and is known in Chinese as the "instrument of the sages" (a 'sage' is a wise person).

The word 'qin' 琴 applies to many different instruments so the prefix 'gu' was added to distinguish the 7-stringed instrument the Scholar played, the guqin 古琴. 'Gu' means ancient. The instrument is quiet and is played in a subtle, refined way. A group of guqin players is called 'yaji' 雅集, meaning elegant gathering.



The guqin is 120 - 125cm long and has 7 strings. It has a rounded upper surface, representing the sky, and a flat bottom surface, symbolizing the earth.

Listen at home!

Listen to these well-known pieces played on the guqin. You can find many of them on YouTube.

Guangling San (廣陵散) (Guangling Melody)

Liu Shui (流水) (Flowing Water),

Yangguan San Die (陽關三疊) (Three Refrains on the Yang Pass Theme),

Meihua San Nong (梅花三弄) (Three Variations on the Plum Blossom Theme),

Xiao Xiang Shui Yun (瀟湘水雲) (Mist and Clouds over the Xiao and Xiang Rivers),

Pingsha Luo Yan (平沙落雁) (Wild Geese Descending on the Sandbank).

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Qi 棋 ('Go')

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This picture shows two scholars in the Ming Dynasty period (1368 – 1644) playing the game of Weiqi (we call it Go in English). Two other scholars are looking on as they play. Servants are attending the men with a fan, backscratchers and tea.

The word 'qi' refers to many types of board games. Weiqi (圍棋) refers to a particular game that has connections with the upper classes and was the game that scholars would have played. The game originated in China but spread to other Asian countries such as Japan and Korea, where the name was translated into their languages. No matter what language, the name of the game translates to 'encirclement' or 'surrounding game'. The English word Go comes from the Japanese name of the game.

Go is still played today throughout the world. A full size board is a grid of 19 horizontal and 19 vertical lines but beginners often play on a 9 x 9 board. Players play with either black or white stones which are placed on the board. The aim of the game is to gain territory. In gaining territory, you also capture the opponent's stones. Both the action of gaining territory and capturing 'prisoners' gives you points, The player with the most points wins.

Play at home!

If you don't have a Go set, there are many ways to make your own. Start by making a 9 x 9 board such as the one below that you can print out.

Traditionally the game is played with black and white stones but you can play with circles cut out of card; coins; bottle caps or pieces from a checkers game.



Elegant Pursuits of the Literati: "The Eighteen Scholars" by an Anonymous Ming Artist (2012 exhibit). Taipei: National Palace Museum.

Here are some good resources to get you started:

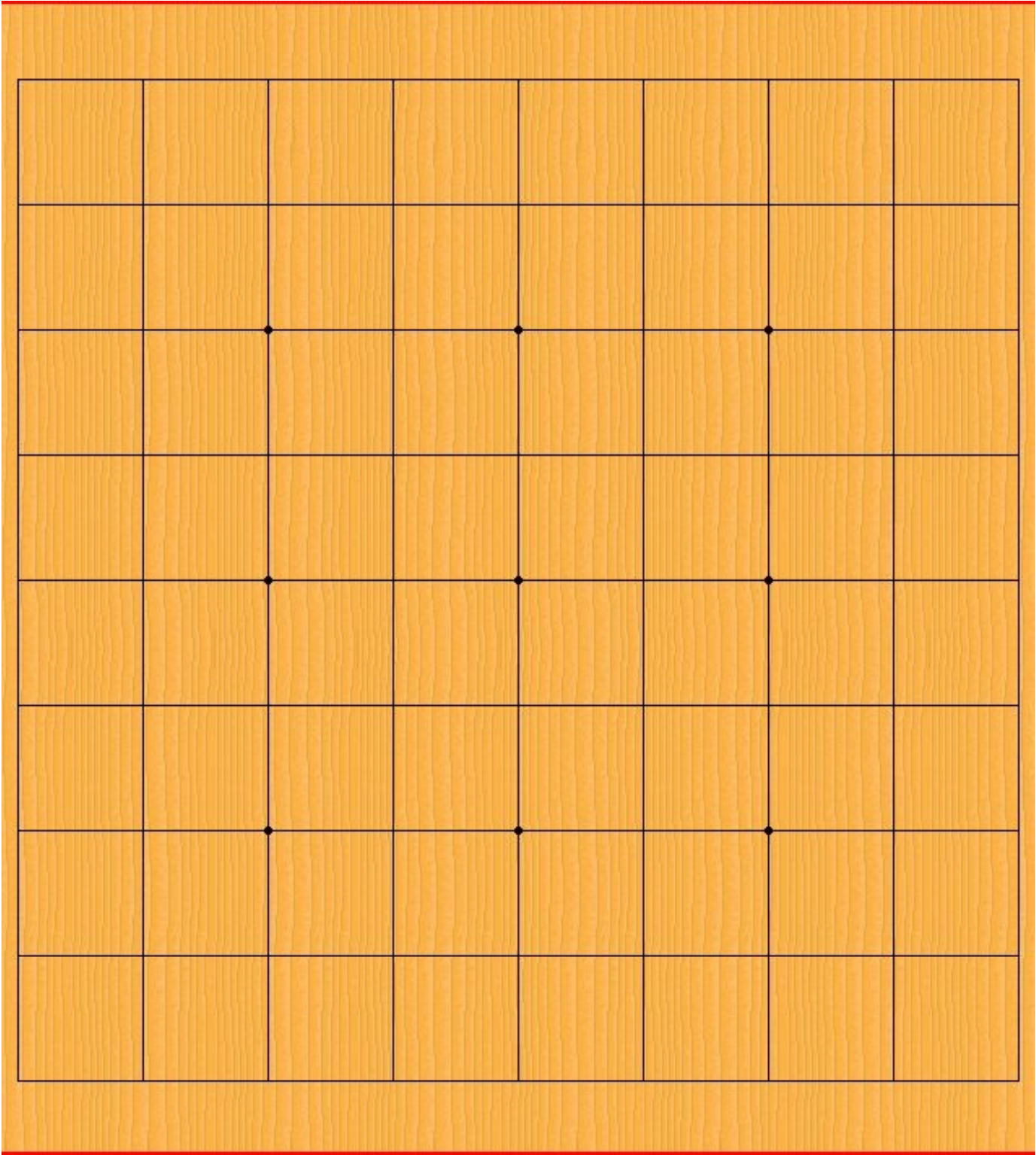
The British Go Association has a very helpful website, including a comic book to explain the rules in a very simple way: <https://www.britgo.org>

A useful video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Q9iCZkzTUK>

Learning Activities - The Four Arts

Qi 棋 ('Go')

The Four Arts 琴棋書畫



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Shu 書 (Calligraphy)

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
























Elegant Pursuits of the Literati: "The Eighteen Scholars"
by an Anonymous Ming Artist (2012 exhibit). Taipei:
National Palace Museum.

This picture shows Scholars in the Ming Dynasty period (1368 – 1644) reading and studying scrolls and books. One of the Scholars is holding a brush and looking thoughtful as if he is about to write a poem. Scholars would have studied poetry and would have been able to understand classical poems as well as write their own.

In China, calligraphy is considered an art form – even more, respected than painting or sculpture. For the Scholars in the painting above, how they wrote the words they chose was as important as what words they wrote. The way these Chinese characters are written on the page – the way they are formed – can show what a person is feeling or thinking at the time they write it. Calligraphy allowed Scholars to express themselves freely.

There are about 20 000 Chinese characters in use. An educated Chinese person knows about 8000 and you need about 2-3000 to read a newspaper. Chinese characters are the oldest writing form still in use today. Evidence of early Chinese writing has been dated back to about 2000 BC.

Early Chinese characters were pictograms, or pictures, of things that people saw around them – things in nature. Calligraphy has gone through a number of changes and developments to its present-day form:

Picture		Evolution		Modern character	English		
	→		→		→		sun
	→		→		→		moon
	→		→		→		tree
	→		→		→		mountain
	→		→		→		water
	→		→		→		field
	→		→		→		door

Development of Chinese Characters from Pictograms to Modern Characters
https://sachinese.files.wordpress.com/2013/02/chinese-writing-and-calligraphy_6.jpg

Learning Activities - The Four Arts

Shu 書 (Calligraphy)

The Four Treasures of the Study

The Four Treasures of the Study are the tools that are needed to produce fine works of calligraphy or brush painting. You can see examples of these in the Scholar's Study in our garden.

They are:

- the ink stick
- the ink stone
- brushes
- paper



Try calligraphy at home!

Chinese characters are not so much written as drawn. Traditional calligraphy and brush painting use the same materials - ink and brush. Both art forms require concentration and time.

If you haven't tried calligraphy before, it can be slightly tricky the first time you try. It's important to remember it is a special art form and some people spend many years studying and practising it to perfection.

You will need:

- Back liquid ink, or black paint
- Paper
- A brush (Chinese brushes are long, traditionally made of bamboo and pointed at the end so you can make a mixture of fine and thick lines)

Calligraphy paper is available in art stores or stores that sell Chinese calligraphy supplies. You can also buy special brush markers that mimic a Chinese brush and have an ink supply built in.

The first thing to do is practise the different types of strokes. Work slowly and carefully with your brush and get to know how to make lines (strokes) that are thick, thin, horizontal and vertical.

Writing Chinese characters is a little like building Lego sets - there is a correct order to write each stroke that goes towards making the entire character. The following pages are practice sheets to help you.

There are many online resources to help you learn and practise writing Chinese characters. Here are a couple:

This is an excellent resource for learning all about Chinese characters, how they work and how to write them: <https://www.digmandarin.com/how-to-write-chinese-characters.html>

Here is link to a video explaining about stroke order: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sgRsun8o2CM>

education.com has many good worksheets for practising.

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Name _____ Date _____

學習中文 *beginner*

LEARNING CHINESE

NUMBERS 1-10

Practice writing numbers 1 to 10 using the correct stroke order.



1 yī	2 èr	3 sān	4 sì	5 wú	6 liù	7 qī	8 bā	9 jiǔ	10 shí
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→	→
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十
一	二	三	四	五	六	七	八	九	十



The Four Arts

[illegible]

Learning Activities - The Four Arts

Hua 畫 (Brush Painting)

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This picture shows a Scholar in the Ming Dynasty period (1368 – 1644) looking at a painting that is being held for him by his servants. Scholars studied the paintings of other artists to learn and improve their own skills.

Ink and Wash painting ('shui-mo' 水墨)

Scholars learnt and practiced ink and wash painting. This is painting using only a brush and black ink done on paper or silk. The black ink has many tones on the paper – sometimes it is grey, sometimes a dark black. Occasionally some colour was added.

Ink and wash painting is an art form still practiced today. Chinese painters do not try to copy the thing they are painting exactly, such as in the idea of a 'still life' in Western art. The idea behind ink and wash painting is to paint the feeling or the 'spirit' of the subject of the painting. So if the painter paints an animal or bird, they try to show its liveliness and personality rather than how its body looks. Because of this 'freestyle' idea, painters are free to paint in a way that expresses their own feelings in a way they choose.

Ink and wash paintings do not have any background. Paintings are simple and, as a stroke of ink cannot be erased, painters think deeply about their painting before they apply any ink to the paper. Brush painting is closely related to the art form of calligraphy as it uses the same tools. Often paintings have poems on them, showing what the artist was thinking when the painting was done.

Most traditional ink and wash paintings are of the natural world – landscapes, flowers, birds and other animals. Ancient Chinese Scholars loved nature and showed their appreciation of it through their art. Often plants were chosen for their symbolic meaning, such as the pine tree which symbolizes wisdom from old age, or the plum blossom which symbolizes hope, as well as beauty.



Elegant Pursuits of the Literati: "The Eighteen Scholars"
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Hua 畫 (Brush Painting)

Try brush painting at home!

You will need:

Black liquid ink, or black paint

Paper

A brush (Chinese brushes are long, traditionally made of bamboo and pointed at the end so you can make a mixture of fine and thick lines)



Poet on a Mountain Top, ink on paper or ink and light colour on paper, album leaf mounted as a hand scroll, by Shen Zhou, Ming dynasty; in the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Mo., U.S.

Calligraphy paper is available in art stores or stores that sell Chinese calligraphy supplies. You can also buy special brush markers that mimic a Chinese brush and have an ink supply built in.

1. Hold the brush correctly

To practise Chinese brush art in the traditional way, you should hold the brush upright, keeping your elbow above the table.

2. Practise brush strokes

Before you start your painting, practice using the brush in this manner.

This is from <https://createartwithme.com/chinese-bamboo-brush-4-basic-brushstrokes-lesson-2/>

- Pulling Stroke: Holding your brush straight upright, pull it across the paper. Use your whole arm as you move, not just the wrist. Use this stroke to paint: tree branches, flower stems, leaf veins, cat whiskers, water movements, etc.
- Pressure Stroke: holding the brush upright, pull it across the paper, but as you pull vary the pressure you are placing on the brush so that the brush strokes vary in width. Use this stroke for: bamboo leaves, willow leaves, grass, cattails, irises, chrysanthemums, etc.
- Side Stroke: Hold the brush at a 45 degree angle, now drag the brush across the paper so that the ink comes from the side of the brush (this is a thick stroke). Use this stroke for: bamboo stalks, flower petals, leaves, clouds, mountain tops etc.
- Smooshing Stroke: Hold the brush upright, relax the handle so it tilts a bit. Push down on the brush so that both the tip and heel are in contact with the paper. Now twist the heel of the brush into the paper. Use this stroke for: flower petals, panda ears

3. Think carefully about your painting before you begin.

When you are ready, use free and confident brush strokes for your masterpiece but go slowly.

Remember, Chinese paintings are simple with much white space on the paper. The blank space lets your eyes rest and allows you to think about the main image.

This is a good website to learn more: <https://www.saa.co.uk/blog/uncategorized/chinese-brush-painting/>

Use the following images to copy or use as inspiration:



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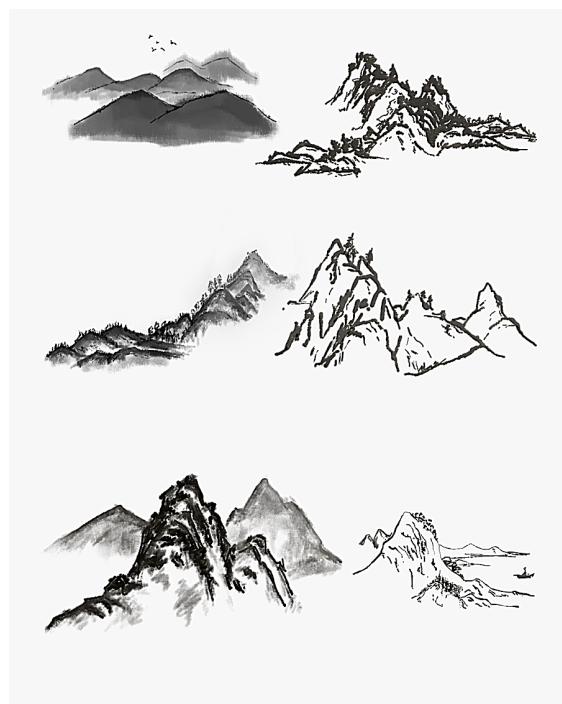
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<https://artprep.weebly.com/chinese-brush-painting.html>

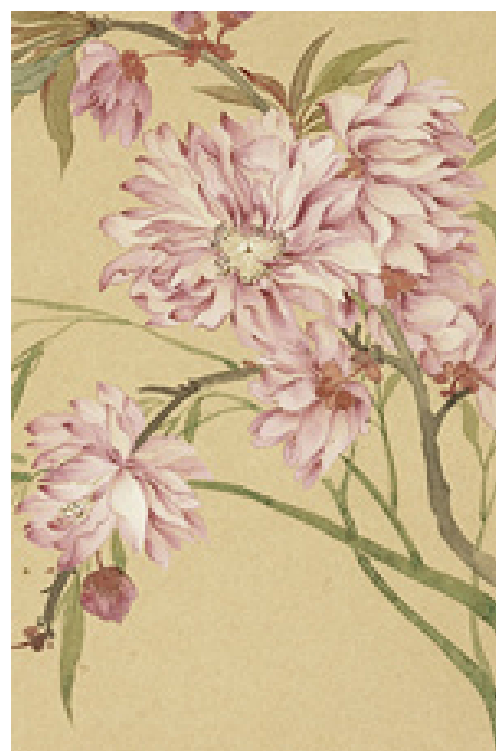


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