The Oxford Character Learning Logs[1]

Students at the Institute for Chinese Studies, University of Oxford are required to learn 40-70 characters, including both simplified and traditional forms, each academic week in their first year of Chinese language study. The students need to know how to pronounce the characters, recognise their meanings, and most importantly, blind-write them without any visual aids. How do the students routinely manage to perform a substantial amount of character learning in addition to their other academic work over a long period of time? In 2011-2014, they were invited to keep dated logs about their character learning experience. Below are excerpts from these logs. (Full transcripts are also available upon request).

2014-2015

I have pulled ahead on learning now in some areas which allows me to revise multiple times before we are to learn them, rather than learn them just in advance.

MTW4[2]

Improving my Anki technique has helped (colour coding for tones).

HTW3

100 [revised] per day. Plus I learn ahead in holidays.

About 1.5 hours a day as Anki timer on cards dictates.

TTW3

2014-15 Undergraduate1

I have definitely improved in terms of active character vocabulary this year, but I think that a lack of systematic approach to character learning on my part has really hindered my progress. I think that a combination of reading texts with the characters and practising them over and over again is the most

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[1] This data has been quoted in the following paper: Hu, B. (2019) Teaching Chinese Characters: what we know and what we can do, in C. Shei, M. Zikpi and D. Chao (eds), the Routledge Handbook of Chinese Language Teaching, Routledge: London.

[2] These data are dated by Oxford terms: MT-Michaelmas Term from October to December, HT-Hilary Term from January to March, and TT-Trinity Term from April to June approximately. Each term runs for eight weeks.

effective strategy as reading them in context makes them less abstract and forms a point of reference for the visual memory, I think.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate3</div>

I find learning the characters very enjoyable and rewarding though obviously it can also be quite difficult, particularly for the traditional forms!

I find it easy to remember what characters look like but it can be difficult to reproduce them (and frustrating when I can 'see it' in my mind yet still can't write it correctly). I find that the best way to learn them is to look at them early in the week and revisit them as many times as possible. I do not find it useful to learn 'a few a day' because then I would not know the later ones as well. I manage to learn them using 'memrise.com' [sic], a very helpful website, and also by writing the characters out as many times as possible. I would estimate that I spend about 30-45 mins per day during the week on characters, plus extra at weekends.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I plan to have a much more organised schedule for learning characters as I am now used to the timetable and amount of work to do.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

I need to be more efficient with the traditional ones and also spend more time actively writing the characters rather than just reciting them.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

This term I have a better routine to learn the new characters including traditional forms and have been practising writing every day.

So far this term a combination of online learning and actual writing has helped me learn so I will stick to that.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

I have been making a big effort to learn active skills rather just passive so my ability to recall characters is improving.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate4</div>

In order to be able to retain the character, pronunciation and tones, it requires that I sit down and write them whilst saying them over and over… There's no easy way to do it. In order to memorise 100 characters per week one must first plan ahead because one sitting will not suffice; multiple sessions are necessary to retain them. Thankfully I have been familiar with the characters thus far so the amount of work I've had to commit has been minimal. This will soon change so I pray I do not grow complacent.

This is not to say that I don't enjoy learning 汉字; I just don't dance around the fact that it's gruelling work.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

This week's traditional characters have been gradually escalating in difficulty. My morning routine, although rather last minute, has worked thus far by going over characters in the library 15 minutes before breakfast.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

This past week I studied the characters through repetition and oral reinforcement. Writing the characters in simplified and then traditional whilst chanting the pronunciation in funny voices has proven one of the most effective methods of studying for me. Additionally, I will often study related words in sentence form by writing them in brief phrases, making them easier to recall than loads of amorphous individual characters that float in my brain.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I have since last term compiled a very useful set of online flashcards of all the characters we are required to know which I'll attempt to update regularly. It has made daily review much more convenient, allowing for the repetition I find necessary for remembering all of the characters.

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

I still find that the best and most effective way to memorise characters is through repetition. My flashcards are integral to this pursuit.

I have found that I quite like the look of a sheet of paper inundated with characters and have begun a small art project to motivate myself to learn all the characters. I am trying to fill one of my walls with a collage of these characters.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate5</div>

Remembering the tones is very difficult.

Learning the traditional as well as simplified can be confusing.

Learn 20 (approx.) every day.

Most of my time working out of lessons goes on learning characters (modern and classical) – 75%.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Still learning the Chinese to English first then focussing on English to Chinese by learning the stroke order and doing small tests on 4-6 words before doing larger tests on all the characters for that week.

Occasionally find that learning a traditional character makes me forget its simplified counterpart.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I find that my ability to remember the characters has increased but so too has the amount I have to remember.

I spend over 80% of my time at home learning characters.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

Characters were easier to learn this week because the same ones were often repeated within words. My learning technique stayed the same; writing out the stroke order and repeatedly testing myself. However, my essay meant that I couldn't devote as much time as usual to character learning.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

Characters are definitely becoming easier to memorise. The learning could have been spaced out a little bit better.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

Character learning is much easier now compared with previous terms, this means I can focus lots more on grammar which I believe to be more important at this stage. I have started to use Anki once more to consolidate all of my character learning as the term goes on.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergradaute6</div>

When learning the characters, I tend to separate the character into components, for example I look the character's radical up and see if any of the other components/the characters are made up of 'easier' characters, for example, I've just learnt the traditional character 煙. Here, I remember the 火 radical as well the 土 in the bottom-right hand corner of the radical. As for the top, I found that quite easy to remember as it appears in 要.

I find [easier] that remembering how to recognise and read the characters if aided by reading that character in context, in for example, texts or even song lyrics.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

The characters set for this week were not too difficult, although the recapping of all of the previous week's vocabulary proved much more challenging. The traditional characters in particular [sic]. This is because I don't read a lot of traditional Chinese character texts, hence I don't encounter them nearly as much as I encounter simplified texts. To help me in remembering these traditional characters I intend to read more traditional Chinese texts.

<div align="right">MTW7</div>

I have come to the conclusion that if I wanted to study characters for short-term use, then merely looking at the characters and 'air-writing' the characters is sufficient. However, if I want to know the characters for a longer period, I have to test myself with, for example, flash cards and sentences as well as read articles using the characters in question.

<div align="right">HTW8</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate7</div>

This week I tried looking at the characters and visualising them and writing them out from memory. I have to admit this has led to inaccuracies when I write down the characters because I sometimes find I have left out some strokes. I think I should spend more time committing the characters to muscle memory. In other words, I should written [sic] them out more and spend less time with visualising and checking.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I feel my character learning was a lot faster – possibly because I was familiar with a few of the characters from previous learning but I think mainly my recognition of radicals and other character components is improving.

<div align="right">HTW3</div>

My character learning has progressed a lot this year. I can now pick up characters a lot faster. Partly because I can make associations between different characters sharing the same radicals… But also because I am now finding that simply focusing on the character and its make up saves a lot of time when it comes to learning it as I no longer have to write them out for lines and lines.

I think that it's easier to write the more complex characters because they require more concentration. It is difficult to maintain a memory of the simplified characters.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate8</div>

Learning characters not only helps me with writing characters but also can aid in helping people speak [sic] them as well.

Something particularly difficult is the time needed to learn characters well enough to commit them to memory.

The stroke order is particularly helpful in remembering characters.

Remember the stroke order but also repeat the meaning and pronunciation whilst writing them.

Invest sufficient time but do not learn them all at once, learn a certain amount every day.

Approx. 9-10 hours a week. Usually an hour on weekdays and perhaps more on weekend.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Remembering which characters have traditional and simplified characters is difficult.

Using characters when doing other work, e.g., grammar, is helpful.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

Remembering characters and their traditional forms from earlier weeks is difficult.

Seeing patterns in how the traditional and simplified differ is helpful.

30 minutes every day with some time on characters learnt [sic] in first weeks.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

I still enjoy learning characters!

Regular testing of the week's vocab is helpful.

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

Learning characters is still one of the most important aspects of the course. In order to contribute to classes you have to be up to date.

The more complex a character, the more recognisable it is and you devote more time to learning the stroke order of these characters.

Memorise stroke order.

Devote some time each day for learning the characters.

Up to an hour a day over the week or more if it is required. Devote enough time that you learn them well enough, don't just learn them for the week ahead.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate9</div>

I write them out over and over again with some background noise to stop me getting bored. I do this about an hour a day, usually just after lunch.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Spending a little less time practising characters but I do it more often – this week I spent about half an hour twice a day at most.

I have started using 'memrise' to help me learn traditional and classical characters. I am finding it really useful – I now only spend about half an hour – forty-five minutes [sic] a day practising characters which maybe 10 minutes of testing [sic] on the memrise website or app when it prompts me to review the words I have learnt.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

Still using Memrise to test Chinese to English, English to Chinese, Chinese to Pinyin and English to Pinyin. I think that takes me about an hour a day to review old characters, and I tend to learn all my new ones for the week ahead in a two or three hour batch that I then review over the week for the next tutorial. I'm remembering them fine that way.

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

Overall, the best method I found for learning characters is a combination of music (to prevent boredom), writing out new characters repeatedly for a line of A4, then learning the character and Pinyin in Memrise. It's prompting me to review characters as according to its learning algorithms

keeps them in my memory far more efficiently than anything else I've tried; although I still wouldn't feel confident going into the exam without double checking all the vocab on my own.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate10</div>

I learn them by writing and saying them lots of times over and pinning them around my room so I see them constantly. When learning them, I find it helpful to think about how I would use them as this makes them easier to remember.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

When I learn the traditional characters, I try to think how they relate to the simplified characters which makes the process a lot quicker.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

This week's traditional characters were quite a few more than last week. Partly due to writing my essay last week, I started learning them later than normal which is I think why I forgot a few. I also must make sure to remember all the strokes as in [sic] learning them quickly, it can be easy to miss out one or two. Overall though, I still find it okay to learn them, I just need to make sure to start a little earlier and repeat enough times.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

This week I started properly using online flashcards which make it much easier and quicker as in multiple 10 minutes slots I could easily see which ones I knew and didn't. I also started a bit earlier which definitely made it easier. Next week I should try to do the same thing.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

I think my character learning strategies have got better as I am able to retain more characters than I was before but I still need to make sure I start earlier. For me, I find the best ways have been writing them out and using electronic flashcards, but repetition really is the most important thing.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

I need to ensure I am really vigilant in making sure I learn them all.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

My character learning processes have definitely got better throughout the year. I now like to use Memrise to learn them passively first before then figuring out which ones I do not know how to write and spend time on those. I also think that learning the traditional has helped with learning the simplified in many cases as I have been able to remember them through the connection. Overall, I am now more efficient at learning characters in a given length of time through multiple repetitions in short bursts.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-2015 Undergraduate11</div>

I feel that learning characters is stimulating in a way similar to working out difficult mathematics problems. There is a certain satisfying element to it and while characters are not as logical as mathematics, there is certainly a comparison for me.

Difficulty arises when there is no perceivable link between the traditional and simplified forms of characters. When that is the case, it can feel like having to learn 2 characters rather than one [sic].

I learn quite traditionally, by simply testing myself repeatedly for this purpose, flashcards can be helpful. In terms of memorisation, simply copying out characters seems less helpful.

It helps to use the characters and context [sic].

Roughly 5 hours.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

It is especially useful when there is no pinyin or translation as it forces me to learn both at once. This helps me to remember the characters by giving both a meaning and pronunciation.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

This week I struggled with learning the characters more. I'm not sure why, similar methods of learning were employed. I think I am getting to the point where a thorough consolidation/review of the characters is needed. The holiday will offer a chance for this, hopefully.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

This term the overall workload seems to be greater than last term's. The volume of characters has not increased too dramatically for modern Chinese but has certainly done so for classical Chinese. The grammar, too, seems to be getting more obscure/difficult (?). However, I feel that I am progressing well and it is gratifying to be able to employ my learning more effectively in tutorials and language classes.

What I struggle with is not the learning of new characters, but the certainty of old ones.

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

The character revision has been alright of late. I tried [sic] that after testing my knowledge the first time I have some significant holes in my learning but, after my second attempt, the knowledge seems to come back fairly seamlessly. I have made sheets of all the vocab from lessons 25-50 and use these to test myself. I have to be wary, however, of simply learning vocab according to position on the test rather than its meaning.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate12</div>

It's nice being able to see your bank of characters get bigger every time you study. I quite enjoy learning them but learning traditional forms and stroke order makes it a bit more tedious but these things are important of course so there's not much to be done about it. I spend about 5 hours a week learning characters and am normally confident with them with this much time spent.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I was confident with the simplified characters for this week but as I forgot to focus on their traditional counterparts I made a few silly errors. Next week I'll make sure to put enough time into both.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

Revised more than usual this week but there were still many slight errors in characters. The amount of characters I now know is becoming such that it requires quite a lot of effort to keep an 'active' memory of them.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

Due to impending exams I've been putting in more effort than usual into learning characters, I tried to do it in large bursts however, e.g., 4 hours at a time which is perhaps not overly sensible but gets results and is suitable for the semi short term memory required for an exam.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Undergraduate13</div>

I find it difficult sometimes to link the characters to their meaning but I find learning the radicals independently helpful in this challenge.

The technique that works best for me is writing the characters out over and over again otherwise they fall out of my active written vocabulary.

Depending on the number of characters, I set aside on [sic] an amount of time each day to learn new characters by writing them out and saying them aloud in a sentence. I also have an app called 'Pleco' which I use for flashcards when I have a few minutes.

About four hours over a week including time spent on flashcards, allocated into my timetable during periods of free time.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

[Found difficult] the stroke number and variance from familiar simplified characters.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

[Found difficult] Learn the pronunciation + understand the function of words.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

Testing, I now keep a separate notebook for writing larger, easier to read traditional characters.

<div align="right">MTW7</div>

More difficult to retain traditional characters from the earliest lessons but manageable nevertheless.

Using the characters in context and being able to identify individual characters on their own as well as within a word.

This week about 3 hours.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

Repetition, using Anki, using acronyms.

Use mnemonics to remember it then rewrite to transfer it to muscle memory.

Setting time aside just for characters + regular testing.

HTW4

Happy. Learning characters faster since remaking Anki deck to include recall cards as well as review cards.

Every day for about 3 hours.

TTW3

2014-15 Undergraduate14

Do a small number each day or lots of characters but with frequent tests for myself.

7 hours, two half hour sessions a day.

MTW3

Write them on a whiteboard and then rub them out and do it again.

7 hours, 3 hours on the weekend, 45 minutes other days.

MTW4

I find repetition is useful for learning characters.

Do about 20 every week day and relax for the other days.

3 hours, half an hour daily.

MTW6

I find the traditional characters easier to learn because I practise them more.

I split the characters over 5 days.

MTW7

I can learn characters well if I consolidate. If I do not, I forget them within a day or two.

HTW4

I find writing characters in sentences makes them easier to learn, along with grammar.

I try to write them out at the start of the week and go back over the week and test myself.

TTW3

I feel good about learning characters, as long as I learn a small amount regularly, I am fine.

I find learning traditional at the same time as modern characters makes both easier.

Between 2-6 hours.

I love learning characters! It's exhausting because of daily upkeep but satisfying.

Easy=deciphering meaning; Hard=daily upkeep.

Use MDBG.net – flashcards, quizzes, example sentences.

10+ hours=mostly writing, some reading.

Enjoying it more.

Finding some relatively more difficult, in general alright.

Key to learning the culture and building more complicated phrases.

Repeat whenever I find brief breaks.

Getting more fun.

Very intricate characters are quite frustrating.

Doing more comparative vocab.

MDBG/Relentless work.

8+ hours.

Remembering specific drawing that I only use for characters is difficult.

Anki is helpful, but I would like to repeat more than Anki asks me to.

Around 15-20 hours a week, I think 25% on learning new characters and 75% on memorising.

I still use the programme Anki every day. I find it very helpful… It now asks me around 150 words every day (half character-meaning and half meaning/pinyin – character).

The thing I find most difficult is adding new characters to my set of words. I now use an app called Pleco which is much better.

It is sometimes difficult that I know characters as such, but I do not know how to use them (the context).

I spend an average 2-2.5 hours per day on characters (when I add new ones it takes a bit more).

I have the most trouble with the stroke order of the characters, especially because I have recently begun to realise that I may have learned the stroke order wrong when I first began learning Chinese.

In order to learn the Chinese characters, I write them out every day in special exercise books, writing them by hand is the only way I can guarantee my memorisation and that I am doing the correct stroke order.

Between 14-15 hours a week on characters (perhaps shorter if I am already familiar with the characters; longer if I don't know them or if they are complicated to write; also longer on learning traditional characters).

Writing out characters is definitely the most efficient but it's very time consuming so I might have to find an alternative method/set aside more time (actually, yeah I just need to be more organised).

The main thing that I find difficult at the moment is remembering the radical component of the characters.

I'm still enjoying learning the characters although sometimes it's difficult to prioritise learning them when I've got other work.

(Found helpful) recognising the relationship between radicals and meaning.

I practise them a little every day and a lot on weekends.

About 16 hrs this week because I have more time.

Enjoy learning characters, hate learning grammar.

Learning tones more difficult than meaning.

Use flashcard software. 30 mins, break, 30 mins…

Every day learn the characters, learn in different ways, matching, gaming …

1 hour per day, if characters more difficult, 2 hours per day.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

1 hour daily, Anki revise 100+words in the morning. Extra revision using flashcards online. 1 hour daily using Ting Xie from online materials, 1.5 hours, four times a week.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Graduate4</div>

To learn new characters, I tend to break them down into their separate components.

I then write them out many times, using them in a sentence and seeing them in context is also helpful.

I find spending a short amount of time often is better than doing all the characters in one go.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I spent a few hours on different days learning characters this week. I still find repetition and testing my memory to be the best way to learn. I also like using them in context.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

I still find repetition to be the best way to learn and I like to learn the stroke order before committing a character to memory. To better remember characters, I need to spend more time giving over [sic] previously learned ones.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

Learning characters is getting easier now that lots of the new words use characters we've already learnt but in new contexts/combinations. This makes it easier to learn characters because the number of totally new ones is relatively small. To learn the new ones, copying them out and testing myself is still the best method I use. It's helpful if I can come up with an explanation as to why certain compounds make up the character, in meaning and sound.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2014-15 Graduate5</div>

I find repetition is most useful. It has also been helpful here that teachers draw links between characters and give us some background history on how the characters developed. Flashcards are also helpful.

I keep a vocabulary book and go over the characters I don't know daily.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I really enjoy it.

14 hours.

Write them out then look, write, check, repeat.

I find remembering the correct pronunciation difficult, whereas I can remember how to write them quite well.

Helpful: repetition, writing them out; Unhelpful: I think I don't hear them enough.

I find it easy to remember how to write them and remember their sound and meaning, I get confused sometimes on how to use them in a sentence.

Write them all out in a book. Constant repetition and using them in a sentence.

2 on learning new characters, overall study of Chinese – 28 [hours].

2014-15 Graduate6

2013-2014

I have found that repeating the Pinyin aloud and thinking of the English meaning at the same time helps with committing the characters to memory.

It's really important to test regularly, in small periods, rather than do one very long session just before the test/tutorial.

It is very important to revise characters from previous weeks, as character decay is starting to become a problem. I have now shifted the focus from learning this week's characters to revising the old ones as well (more emphasis on that).

I write every week's vocab list set out in simplified, traditional and pinyin in advance, then I usually spend between one and two hours learning them by repeating them (writing) and saying aloud the pinyin whilst trying to remember the different components. After the initial learning session, I practice them in shorter sessions (about 30 minutes) every 1-2 days.

2013-14 Undergraduate1

Anki creates tests, and I create stories to explain the stroke order until it becomes muscle memory.

I'm now spending about 2 hours a day on character tests and the results have been fantastic so far.

I am experiencing a bit of 'character decay' especially on more complex characters, so I am testing the ones I'm worse at more frequently.

Using every spare moment and targeting words I'm worst at helps a great deal with the massive volume of characters.

Lots of spare moments throughout the day, about 1.5-2 hours in total.

2013-14 Undergraduate3

I find stroke order difficult to remember and because I am learning characters for the first time, right now I don't really see the significance.

Stroke order is not particularly helpful.

I have finally begun to learn more gradually for 5 days before tutorials.

A few hours (2 hours) for five days a week or less.

Feel fairly happy.

I find learning with the stroke order helpful.

2013-14 Undergraduate4

Some characters are becoming slightly easier and quicker to learn. It helps if I can see/work out the parts that the character is made of.

Probably spend an hour a day learning new characters plus an extra hour and a half revising previously learnt every day.

Sometimes [it] helps to write lines of harder characters or make associations in my head, at least an hour and a half needed per day to keep on top.

Having reached the point when all the characters have been studied, need to keep practising every day and often discover that I have forgotten earlier characters and need to re-learn. Anki software is very helpful for this.

I read them attentively.

I spent one hour each day for reading and writing characters.

MTW5

Saying them in context helps to remember them.

By practising them regularly.

TTW6

This week has been pretty difficult, as characters pile up so quickly. I am going to have to take more time out to go over classical, as well as the recent modern vocab.

MTW6

Over the holidays I started using a different technique with more blind-testing as opposed to writing them repeatedly.

HTW4

Learning characters is still much easier than before, although they can get a bit muddles [sic] without practise.

TTW3

3-4 hours a day/25 hours a week (MTW3), 1 hour every day/10 hours a week (MTW4), 5 hours during the week and 4 hours at the weekend (MTW6), 1 hour on weekdays, 2 hours a day on weekends (MTW8), 7 hours a week (HTW4), 1 hour a day and 2 hours each day on the weekend (TTW6)

Prepare the weekend before and revise during the week (MT, HT and TT)

I find it helpful to understand the constituent radicals and characters which make up more complex characters.

MTW3

It is helpful to make flashcards which I can use to learn them, I don't find electronic tools like Anki very useful.

1 hour a day (minimum) plus 2 hours a week for making my flashcards (the writing out of which helps me learn them).

Difficult- retaining characters which I haven't seen for a couple of months. Easy- learning them the first time round.

Flashcards and repetition are helpful. Trying to tackle them all at once is not.

I divide my time. Take the characters in small blocks so I am not overwhelmed by the look of learning them all.

12-16 hours a week.

There were a lot of characters this week, which made it difficult. It seemed very daunting, but once I began it felt a lot easier because I recognised patterns in the characters - radicals, sound components, etc.

Making links between characters and taking them one by one, then lesson by lesson is helpful. It makes the task seem less impossible. It is unhelpful to think about all the characters you need to learn at once.

I do them little by little from the day after my language tutorial. I probably spent about 9 hours this week. Broken evenly over five days Thurs-Mon.

Time management has been a problem this week; having to write an essay at the same time as learning this week's 73 modern characters has meant I have little time to revise previous week's vocab.

Breaking what I have to learn into smaller segments is helpful. If I concentrate on learning 5 characters at one time, as opposed to thinking about them all at once, task seems less daunting.

I try and learn groups of characters (5/6) and test myself on them. I then build up the test as I accrue vocab so once I've learnt 3 groups, my test would consist of 15-18 characters and so on.

9 or so hours, starting off with a concentrated 3-4 hours and then doing smaller 30 minute bursts throughout the week.

Repetition is helpful. As are short bursts of learning. Learning small blocks of characters instead of looking at them all at once is helpful.

Treat classical and modern separately to make the task seem less insurmountable.

Learning characters is becoming easier and easier as patterns merge [sic] in the characters.

20 hours over 5 days, Saturday-Wednesday. Split up so I probably spend about 10 hours at weekend and 10 hours Mon-Thur.

Learning characters seems to have become easier, I find that I am able to learn them faster this term.

Remembering characters from previous weeks can be difficult when I do not keep on top of them whilst learning new ones.

I have found flashcards to be unhelpful, as they waste time. Simply writing and testing seems to be the best method.

Repetition is helpful as is trying to force myself to remember the characters after only looking at them once.

I try not to get overwhelmed by them. I treat them as groups of 5 so that I am not overwhelmed.

4hrs over 5 days.

I feel like characters have become a lot easier to learn and so learning them no longer makes me feel stressed. I find it easy to learn characters week by week but I am having to revise ones from previous weeks regularly.

Constantly retesting myself on previously learned characters.

As the exams approach, I am feeling quite stressed about all the characters I have to revise. Revising characters is more stressful than previous weeks because I am feeling more pressure that [sic] I have to know them perfectly.

2013-14 Undergraduate10

I probably spend 1-2 hours a week learning characters and 1-2 practicing [sic] but this time will increase as I encounter more unfamiliar characters.

Remembering characters short term is easy, long term is harder.

Clear lists of what we need to learn are useful.

It was a little harder this week! There weren't too many characters but I found I had forgotten some of the older characters or the traditional forms. Next time I will need to make more of an effort to include thorough revision of previous characters alongside new characters.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

Many of the new words have characters we have already learnt so although were having to learn more words every week, the number of characters is decreasing.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

<div align="right">2013-14 Undergraduate11</div>

I find using the words in sentences makes them much easier to learn than learning individual words. I find connecting the writing to the sounds hard. The 100 characters a week is a lot of work and often characters less commonly used in sentences slip. The fact that classical characters can look the same but mean something completely different to the modern is very confusing.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

My previous character learning was not going well so I am trying a new method of spaced repetition rather than larger blocks of study and am hoping this will lessen the effects of character decay and make characters stick in my brain. The issue is that I can look at new characters to learn even for up to two hours before a test but then blank completely when it comes to it so hopefully small chunks will go better. Stress levels have gone through the roof but hopefully if these techniques work I will feel in control of my work again.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

The spaced repetition learning is going quite well. Classical vocab test scores are improving. I want to try to start learning the vocab for the next week earlier so it has a longer time to sink in ready for speaking since the speed of my recognition and answers is not that good. I plan on learning further in advance and practising some conversation in advance in order to improve this. Hopefully this should give me more time to spend on writing too as that part of my learning also needs more practice. I am feeling happier with my work and less stressed but still have a lot to do. The number of characters for this was a lot (80-ish modern, 30-40 classical) but I am happy that I gave it my best effort.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I have found character decay to be a major problem this week especially with classical characters. I am already using the spaced repetition technique with digital flashcards to go over old characters but I think I need to do it more often as we have learnt so many characters. I think I am getting into a routine now as I know exactly what I need to do and by when for the week's classes. I feel happier learning characters because of this and am really enjoying the modern language now. I am sure this will soon follow with the classical characters once I feel more secure in my knowledge of them. I definitely think context helps as once I have read conversations including the characters I can remember them better.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

I am now having to spend a lot more time going over old characters since we now know so many. The spaced repetition flashcard app is really helpful as it allows me to go over old characters quite easily. Repetition is definitely helpful as is context. I have been trying to have some conversations with my neighbour whose first language is mandarin [sic]. I would like to do this more often to improve my responsiveness. I think consolidation over the holidays is greatly needed.

MTW7

I have started arranging vocab into groups based on grammatical function and use/subject. I have found this helps me to associate words with each other and I hope this will help me to talk about a particular subject for longer. I definitely need to consolidate my characters, go over them all and use them in imagined situations. I also need to practise my writing and go over traditional characters especially. I am getting an idea of the best techniques that help me learn characters – flashcards, contextual conversations in the textbook, grouping words and hope to find more over the holiday ready for the number of characters to increase.

MTW8

Vocab list length has gone up a lot this week for both modern and classical. I am having to further improve my time management with other parts of the course to learn it all. Some words are very easy to learn now though as I already know the component characters. Repeating again and again is definitely the most useful to [sic] I am trying to start the flashcards for the next week earlier so that I have time to do this. Fitting in practice through the writing and listening exercises is getting harder though. Now that I have completed my essay I hope to spend more time on this to consolidate before the amount of work goes up further.

HTW4

I am recognising quite a lot more characters now, combinations of meanings are being learned more often than new words. Learning new characters takes a shorter time – I make digital flashcards, look up grammar points, use a whiteboard to learn how to write the characters and then repeat flashcards until I can remember the characters three times in a row (which the app measures for me). After this, I will consolidate with reading, listening and writing exercises. I find this routine works well, although now it is nearly the end of the term, I am finding character decay a real problem so will need to consolidate a lot more, including grammar revision exercises on the website. I am able to spend less time learning new characters but more time going over old characters as I have learnt so many now.

HTW7

Characters have become quicker to learn since I now recognise many of the morphemes which make up disyllabic words. This means I am spending less time on learning the same number of new characters but spend more time consolidating older ones and using them in translations.

TTW3

I am now consolidating characters through reading and listening to texts which contain them which is reminding me of a lot of characters. Still need to revise a lot of traditional characters since they are more complex.

TTW6

2013-14 Undergraduate12

Remembering the tone is the most difficult part.

If I have a story to go with the character, that helps. It also really helps to see the characters in context in a sentence.

I use the Heisig method sometimes. I write them in a notebook, check that I know how to use them all in a sentence, then just cover up, write them down, check and repeat.

Study every day and use lots of repetition. Reading exercises are also useful.

Approx. 2 hours a day? Difficult to estimate but it seems to be working so far.

MTW8

There have been more characters with more 'abstract' meanings this term. It is harder to visualise these concepts.

With difficulty, this term. Try and do characters every day. 6-10+ (hours a week).

HTW8

Better! It was harder to learn the characters last term but I think I am able to manage my work more this term and do the characters every day.

Flashcards and listening to the recordings is helpful. Just study by rote.

Maybe 1 hour a day on characters.

TTW3

2013-14 Graduate1

I found inventing stories or visual connections useful in remembering characters.

I write characters out repeatedly on paper because I find the muscle memory useful. I test myself using varied methods: sometimes I write out the sounds and then try and remember the characters; sometimes I write out the English translation, etc.

8 hours+…no specific allocation. Just work on characters I feel I don't know well.

MTW7

It is becoming much more difficult to learn all of the new characters, particularly since many characters now sound the same, or look the same and sound different.

Writing out the characters repeatedly helps the most.

10+ hours.

HTW8

I find it easier to remember the characters based on their sounds now – no [sic] I am used to the different tones.

Also I am using the PLECO app on my iPhone to make flashcards. Also I find learning the etymology of characters helps a lot, e.g., 广播.

Grouping together characters which look similar or sound similar helps: 自己 and 日记.

It is becoming less daunting as one gradually knows more radicals and meanings.

Pronunciation and retaining them (are difficult) if not revised regularly.

I have set up a system to learn them now which helps me, and even though it is quite time-consuming I believe making a mnemonic about each character will help me remember them in the long-run.

I use the book 'Remembering Simplified Hanzi' to first create a visual story about the character and create a flashcard, thereafter I write out the character 10 times, with its pronunciation. Each flash card is also colour coded after tones and marked down from which chapter it comes [sic]. After I have finished one chapter I practise writing out the text revising those I don't remember well enough. I roughly cover 8 a day and will start off each session with writing out the characters I learnt the previous day.

Roughly 2-4 hours each day, 7 days a week.

I have now moved further in that I do seem to be able to learn characters faster as one knows more and more components and radicals.

I have also tried to make it more time efficient by after writing the flashcard instead of first writing out the same character several times [sic], I now go straight to just trying to write out all the newly learnt characters to see if I can remember them.

It is getting easier because you know more and more characters. The only problem is that you must remember to refresh previous terms' characters!

It takes less time now, but I still allocate roughly 10 characters per day.

I am also using Skritter more, I would still say that I use about 1 hour and a half to 2 hours per day on characters.

I feel I may have to reassess the way I learn. As I feel I am not retaining the characters well enough so may have to go back just to writing them out over and over, as flashcards do take a long time to make.

Using Skritter much more. I think this is more helpful. But I am still making flashcards especially for full-form characters.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

Just revising using flashcards, still proving that unless you revise regularly, especially [sic] words which are unusual and not used a lot they [sic] will quickly disappear.

<div align="right">TTW7</div>

<div align="right">2013-14 Graduate3</div>

2012-2013

Easy: stroke order

Difficult: remembering the actual character

Helpful: keeping focused on the character

Unhelpful: Mindless repetition

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Prioritise character learning.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate1</div>

It's tough to keep up, especially on weeks where I have an essay, but I can manage it, and I enjoy it.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I have now found that the most efficient method of learning characters is using cue cards. It allows me to memorise meaning and pronunciation faster and makes it easier to revise them.

<div align="right">No date</div>

It's much easier now and I feel I'm on top of things.

Anki flashcards.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate2</div>

Repeat until it sticks.

<div align="right">No date</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate3</div>

When learning characters, I have been learning the stroke order and tried familiarising myself with each one straightaway. I then put the set characters into some flashcard software on my phone and/or laptop.

The software helps me to produce a character on demand, without expecting which one I'll have to write. It also helps for testing myself on lots of characters at once. I have a pen and paper in front of me when I use the software, so that I can write out what I think is the answer.

I find that sometimes when I use the software, I don't properly connect [sic] myself if I get an answer wrong.

MTW3

This week I started learning my characters earlier on and this helped to consolidate my memory.

MTW6

Learning characters is far easier two terms on. The more you learn, the more familiar you become with certain parts of characters that reoccur.

TTW6

2012-13 Undergraduate4

First, write characters repeatedly, covering previously (learnt) characters so I can't see the Chinese characters, write English, try to remember Pinyin and character, then cover Pinyin and characters. Repeat a few times. Come back to them the next day/a few hours later.

MTW3

Lots of short sessions of character learning seem best.

I am now more efficient – identifying difficult characters and focusing more on them, wasting less time on writing out characters I already know.

MTW7

Important to review characters, make lists of difficult ones to remember, then test myself later.

HTW6

Learning characters much easier.

Learn 5-10 passively, then actively recall, repeat, extend, not more than 25-30 minutes at a time.

We've seen lots of characters before now, just learning words in new character combinations. This makes things easier.

TTW3

2012-13 Undergraduate5

Intimidating.

I find it particularly helpful to learn them in context. That is, to put them in a sentence and repeatedly write out the sentence, rather than trying to learn them in isolation.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I tried to learn them in one sitting; I now learn them in sections over a few days and I think that this is more productive.

<div align="right">No date</div>

Learning unabbreviated characters at the same time as simplified is my new method, and it seems to help.

<div align="right">No date</div>

I find it more enjoyable these days because it is increasingly possible to see its usage.

I learn them each morning and evening.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate6</div>

MUST LEARN EVERY DAY.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I think I am starting to manage learning. I am increasing hours spent leaning and revising to consolidate.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

With regard to character learning, I feel that I have got to grips with associating certain radicals with certain sounds and also the thematic continuity with certain radicals. This has helped me to learn many new characters quickly compared to last term. I've started learning them earlier and with fewer per go, also the addition of Anki has improved my long-term memory of characters.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

I wish we read more stories in which the characters were employed.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

I think learning words and characters in the context of text and conversation is very good and also hearing them spoken is really important for computing and linking the sound/meaning/written character together. In the short term I'm very good at memorising many disparate characters but it takes dedicated repetition to actually memorise them long-term.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate7</div>

I try to envisage a story behind the character as this helps me to remember them a lot better. I write them out lots of times with the sound and meaning and then test myself on them on another page. Those I can't remember I do more and again until I know them.

Spend free time wherever possible doing it. I certainly feel I need extra concentration for character learning compared to other tests. It can be hard to fit in time needed to do it properly when I have an essay for example.

MTW3

There are so many characters to learn!

I write them out several times and test myself on them. I often check the stroke order on nciku.

I do them in sections rather than at once.

MTW4

I started earlier this week.

The computer testing programme and nciku are very helpful.

MTW5

I do them in blocks day by day.

Requires heavy concentration so I do them in the library where there are less distractions.

MTW6

Starting earlier in the week has helped.

Keep re-testing until learned.

HTW6

I find learning new characters easier, the difficulty is remembering older ones.

TTW3

It's always getting less challenging although remains very time consuming.

I use flashcards. I have a good system now using a Pleco flashcards app.

TTW6

2012-13 Undergraduate8

Create cue card which I can carry around with me and use while queuing in shops, etc, then test myself on these.

I break the characters down into chunks - perhaps 15-20 a day so that I can feel like I have achieved something each day.

I use whatever time is available, e.g., going from place to place, plus maybe three hours to test myself, spread over the week.

I find frequent testing helpful.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I probably failed to devote enough time to learning, but I used the time that I did devote to it efficiently.

Initial retention ratio for characters is about 2/3 to 3/4, with more detailed work such as writing out repeatedly, creating character stories from the various components of each character, etc., required for the remainder.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

It's getting harder and harder to learn each character…. As I reach saturation point for a term, I find myself using more time on each character.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

It was an easier week this week. There are more inter-connecting words (words sharing characters, words on the same topic, etc.) helped [sic] to reinforce the characters.

It seemed easier to construct little character stories this week: 接 is clearly a woman doing a handstand, built for memorisation.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

Initial learning of the characters is much easier, probably because I now have a good base of radical [sic], etc., so can learn many characters part by part rather than stroke by stroke.

I need to work on spreading my learning more evenly over the week – I seem to end up doing blocks of history work and blocks of language work on different days, whereas an even spread might be preferable.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

I find it can be helpful to note down other uses of character beyond the words we're given to learn, especially with characters we've met in only one context (e.g., '连---也---'的连). It seems to help situate the characters better in my mind.

For classical characters, creating mind maps of characters arranged by radical/sound/meaning seems to help in the same way - it makes the learning easier.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate10</div>

I think the most effective way is probably to, over the course of several weeks, use new characters in sentences and phrases.

I write them out lots, and try to think about their appearance/visualise them as I write them.

I do short periods regularly.

Stroke orders are challenging - I have picked up bad habits.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I'm not sure how to write 看. I keep forgetting 店 is like that, not 居.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I practice regularly - this is good and works well. I remember to memorise simplified as well. Good to just do a few minutes at regular intervals during the day. It is getting easier. Use in tutorials help. Classical complements modern in terms of learning traditional.

<div align="right">HTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undergraduate11</div>

I actually enjoy learning characters. I find I have quite a visual memory; I can learn a character after writing it out once or twice - or even just looking at it for a few seconds. My main problem is remembering how to pronounce them, the Pinyin and pronouncing them correctly.

I find stroke order is the most useful tool when learning characters. It makes writing characters a systematic process, rather than just writing an arbitrary graph.

I devote a few hours to learning them every week – and focus on stroke order and radical breakdown.

I find traditional characters easier to learn than simplified because, as mentioned before, I focus on stroke order and the separate radicals. For example, I find 東 easier to remember than 东 because it can be understood in terms of 木 and 日 instead of just random lines.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

This week I've been trying to build upon the character [sic] I already know to learn new words, such as compounds like 吸血鬼.

This week I've found that, while learning the new characters, I've been forgetting/becoming unclear on the old ones. So this week I've been going over the characters we've already learned so as not to forget them. I find that, because the characters are so often arbitrary, it's easy to forget them if you don't use/practice them constantly.

<div align="right">No date</div>

Learning characters has become much easier since the beginning of the year. I find I can learn them passively now, rather than actively.

<div align="right">TTW4</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Undegraduate12</div>

Character learning is hard! I think I've cracked a character after writing it out several times, but often when I come back to it the next day, I struggle to remember how to form it again, I'm trying to practice writing more regularly to get around it. It helps if I make up stories and break up the radical to understand its meaning better.

I've started experimenting with colours to remember the tones correctly too.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I have tried to get into the routine of learning characters every morning. I practice five to ten new characters every day as well as reviewing old characters from the previous book on a computer programme called Anki. This selects fifty characters per day to review. The English flashes up on the screen and I try to write down the character and say the pinyin. I am still having trouble remembering characters!

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

Character learning is beginning to get a little easier - I now spend at least two hours reviewing old characters from previous characters to make sure I don't forget (although it's surprising how much you don't retain when you stop revising for a few days). Each morning I manage to learn around five new characters.

<div align="right">TTW4</div>

I'm still using Anki to learn characters. Every day I try to review at least 100 characters to make sure I remember them. As I learn more I am starting to mix up radicals, character order, etc. with a few abstract characters that I don't use very often. Otherwise I feel happier about character learning.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Graduate1</div>

I try to make up stories roughly according to what radicals look like, and fail in most cases. I write them repeatedly, but this only helps with memory after an extended period of tireless repetition.

Chaotically. No organisation.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Nowadays I'm trying to learn the characters of the week during the weekdays of that week - one quick session in the morning and another one in the evening. On the weekends, I try learning vocabulary from the past chapters to keep recycling them. I've incorporated a new technique of writing characters down on post-it notes and sticking them up everywhere in my room. So far this last innovation has proved altogether futile.

I wish we could speak and converse in Chinese more during class time since thinking in Chinese and using the words we know is the best way to remember it.

<div align="right">No date</div>

The more characters I learn, the easier it gets because there is a big overlap with a lot of radicals.

I still don't think I could learn and memorise all 100 characters in a week, though I do get close to it.

As for character learning, nowadays I continue plain memorisation (that involves mechanical repetition) with application. I learn some in the morning and learn the same ones again before I go to sleep.

Good! I still like learning them even though it's hard.

Write them out and make flashcards and get friends to test me.

I do it every day but extra at the start of the week to make language lessons more useful as I already know the characters.

Learning radicals helps, being taught them by my Japanese friend helps.

Character learning is hard but good. It's satisfying when you get them.

I use iPad apps (Skritter) and write characters out over and over again to learn them.

Character learning is the hardest bit about learning Chinese. I have to dedicate most of my time to learning them.

I write out flashcards for each chapter, record the words on to an MP3 file and try to visualise the characters as I listen. I also test myself from time to time and put the characters I got wrong up on the wall in my room.

It's pretty challenging especially when trying to differentiate between similar looking characters.

I try to break the characters down into reasonable-sized groupings, try to recognise sound indicators or clues to meaning. I then draw them on paper repeatedly.

I often use the early afternoon to review characters and then again before bed.

I find it helpful to review the context sentences in order to memorise the characters.

Very difficult (MTW3) – growing especially hard this week (MTW4) – even more difficult (MTW6) – Very hard, v v difficult (MTW8) – even more problematic at the moment (HTW4)

Look for pictorial patterns and similarities in radical patterns (MTW3) – increasingly difficult to learn characters via pictorial associations (MTW4) – more pictorial associations (MTW7) – try to learn characters completely pictorially (HTW4)

<div align="right">2012-13 Gradaute6</div>

I then drew this (touch screen) in to Pleco (app), understood the composition of radicals, heard the word out loud, and said the character out loud.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

I am now using ANKI [sic] flashcard software. I have the English definition flash up on the screen then I write down the Chinese characters on a piece of paper. I say them out loud – I don't write the Pinyin.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Gradaute7</div>

I focus on stroke order which helps me memorise especially the more complicated characters. I look up the etymology of the character and the radical meaning. I sometimes also create a story about the character with the different parts/radicals of it. I also think listening to the pronunciation of the character while memorising how to write it is very helpful.

Practicing every day is also crucial – especially when you are learning brand new characters. I find repetitive writing/revision throughout the week very beneficial.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

I have found doing a lot of translation practice helpful as it helps me memorise word order as well as the characters themselves.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Gradaute8</div>

Splitting it into about 20 characters a day.

It takes about 30min – 1 hour per 20 characters.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

<div align="right">2012-13 Gradaute9</div>

2011-2012

Before I started at Oxford I had made 2 or 3 false starts with Chinese…. I had dropped out of a […] course because I had fell behind with character learning. Therefore I was terrified about Oxford, hopefully knowledge of how hard it is and fear of dropping out had galvanised my work ethic for now!

Flashcards are useful. I carry them on key-rings round with me everywhere. When I learn a character I take it off the ring and file it for a few weeks. I try and write them for an hour a night.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I have changed my flashcards to yellow post-it notes stapled together. I had an educational psychologist report, she advised me to use yellow instead of white paper because research suggests dyslexics learn more from it! I am genuinely finding it easier to retain hanzi as a result, though perhaps this is because the more you study hanzi the easer it gets (because you learn radicals, etc.).

I am also making up mnemonics, e.g., 識=立 is ½ of business + sun (日) + ½ 'I' = life should be ½ work and ½ selfish and done in the sun.

I make sure I read them before I sleep – educational psychologist [sic] said research shows it's easier to retain if I do this.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

LITTLE&OFTEN instead of one long session.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

I try and listen to these recordings every night before bed and picture the hanzi.

<div align="right">MTW7</div>

I listen to role plays and write them out in full.

<div align="right">HTW1</div>

I have been using Anki on my iPhone – big, yellow background flashcards about a 1000 characters in my pocket when I want them. Very convenient.

Anki perhaps makes me do less writing and more viewing – my recall is fading perhaps as a result, then again, this time last term my recall was worsening as volume of characters builds

Volumes are building unpleasantly but at the same time I have little to no problems with anything from Michaelmas… mixed!

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

I enjoy it more and put less time into learning because the learning is getting so much easier.

Every few weeks I try to list old ones that I keep forgetting so I can relearn.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

I learn best when I put things in manageable chunks.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Undergraduate1</div>

Read through characters in sentences saying them out loud to become familiar with shapes, use and meaning.

Then look through vocab list to work out how many I haven't seen before and how many I already know a bit about.

Then go through the list writing out the English, then Pinyin, then character – using stroke order info – on a piece of paper. Write out character using stroke order for the first one, then write it out again and again being precise in the order. Write in a line then when starting to get a bit faster/more confident, I will move to a place on the paper where I can't see the character and try writing it again, to test whether I'm actually starting to remember it or if it is just because I can see it that I am writing more fluently.

Always say the Pinyin and think about meaning as I write it. Every so often think of memory tricks. Do this for each character in the list then leave it and come back to it a few hours later to test myself (going from English to character and saying Pinyin).

When I start to know them I make flashcards and in future shuffle them so not just learning in order.

Take each character at a time and then go over them at least once a day. Test myself again and again, sometimes when doing other things randomly test myself on characters I find hard.

Learn simple first then unabbreviated when confident on simplified.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

This week the characters went into my brain a lot more easily at first.

I did the same technique but was more focussed – by putting more time pressure on myself, I concentrated better and thus learnt them better.

I practised using them in exercises more which helped solidify them in my mind. Listening to good music also helped me learn them – although not music with a lot of lyrics.

I make sure I go over them at least twice a day and really concentrate on any I don't know.

I use flashcards and shuffle them to make sure I don't just learn the order of characters in a list instead of actually knowing them individually.

I learn the simplified thoroughly before starting on the traditional, which makes them a lot securer in my memory. Characters this week were more interesting/form more sentences and thus more interesting/better to learn.

Also, I know more vocab in grammar, which means I use them in practice.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I learn them chapter by chapter over a few days but find they don't really go into my brain until Sunday night, when I feel like I don't know any, get annoyed, have a coffee, and go over them concentrating hard.

Then I know them much better on Monday morning and just go over until happy with them for tutorial.

Still learn simplified first but add the traditional in earlier (lesson by lesson).

Lot more to learn this week but didn't necessarily take more time. Starting to see more pattern to the characters and thus they are slightly easier to remember.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

Seeing much more pattern to the characters now which makes them quicker to learn. Especially the traditional characters. There being fewer characters means that I could test myself on them more and so they are stronger in my mind.

Can make more interesting sentences with them now as well, which makes them more fun and thus easier to learn.

Nice therapeutic break from writing essays so nicer to learn.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

Learning characters definitely a lot quicker now. Now I'm in the habit of learning them. They go into my brain more easily than before.

<div align="right">HTW7</div>

Revising characters now. Have to concentrate on ones I don't know that well. I find the best way to practice [sic] them is by using them in sentences.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Undergraduate2</div>

I try to revise the new sets almost every day. The older sets I might revise (by testing myself) 3 times a week. The oldest, and most basic, I might revise once a week. In this way I try to store them in true long-term memory.

I commit quite a lot of time to it – perhaps 2-3 hours a day of my free time, including making the cards.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Character learning moves between satisfaction and frustration but I still feel it is under control.

I found just sticking to lists could be unhelpful, as I need to target the hardest characters separately and spend less time on other parts of the list.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I make sure to learn the complex characters and simplified simultaneously, I don't think splitting up this learning would be productive.

<div align="right">MTW6</div>

I used the squared paper sheets to properly practice them in conjunction with regular testing to make sure a high percentage has been achieved in advanced of any date.

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

Character learning seems to be easier this term because the process of character acculturation is reaching maturity.

<div align="right">

TTW3

2011-12 Undergraduate3

</div>

I really enjoy learning and writing characters. I think it is kind of a relaxing exercise.

<div align="right">

MTW3

2011-12 Undergraduate4

</div>

Learning characters I find time-consuming but ultimately worthwhile. I find that if I learn a character once, I do not need to revise it too often, providing I use it enough.

I use a code to remember stroke order (a different pen colour per stroke in a fixed order).

<div align="right">

MTW3

</div>

During first week I made flashcards on Thursday but having to hand in essays now on Monday and an earlier tutorial slot means this week I feel less confident about the characters I am meant to have learned. I predict that I will be able to adjust to this in future weeks.

<div align="right">

HTW3

</div>

I think learning characters is getting easier because I am remembering new ones more easily. Plus new characters are often old ones with new radicals and new words sometimes repeat characters I have already learned.

<div align="right">

TTW3

</div>

I have divided my days in hourly segments. This means I do three hours a day of classical/modern characters. I get through between 100-200 characters per day.

<div align="right">

TTW6

2011-2012 Undergraduate5

</div>

At the beginning I needed 3 hours for 20 characters. Now it is approx. 1 hour. Thus, it is getting more and more manageable to learn Chinese characters. (MTW3) – The speed at which I now learn characters had incredibly improved. On average, I'd need 1-2 minutes for 1 character. (HTW3) – The speed at which I now learn Chinese characters has augmented significantly. This development makes studying Chinese fairly enjoyable (TTW4).

Knowing more components of a character, mostly thanks to the studies of classical Chinese, I can understand how a character was formed much more profoundly.

<div align="right">

TTW4

</div>

Also I think in characters instead of Pinyin now.

I make a video of myself pronouncing the Pinyin for all the characters, and use the video I made to test how fast I can write the character after hearing how it's pronounced. I play this video and others once or twice a day.

If I'm still having problems, I post the character on my wall on a card then I continue to practice its stroke order. Often I will try to invent an explanation or story for the character, e.g. 教 jiào → have to have the elder (土) teach the son (子) by bearing [sic] him (攵).

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

My new method is practice [sic] characters through flashcards every day. I think it's better than giving myself not so good pronunciation of each character on the video [sic].

<div align="right">HTW4</div>

I think my character learning is a little better this term – I study all the characters I need to learn over a period of 4 days, writing each a few times very slowly and cautiously (so it will hopefully stay in my memory).

Also going over flashcards helps a lot.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

The most important factor for me in learning characters is time and repetition over a long duration. For instance, a character learnt for the first time – by whichever method – must be given the same attention at regular intervals; the next few days, a week later, six months later. This not only imprints the character on a more permanent basis, but has noticeably trained my brain to analyse the strokes and shapes of new characters more easily. Having learnt characters informally for over a year, a new character is far easier to memorise now than it was when I began. I attribute this more than anything else to the exposure my brain has had over a long period.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I usually practice [sic] traditional character writing by writing them a few times on paper. When doing this, I try to respect stroke order as it helps me to memorise characters.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

Each time I write a simplified character, I try to write its full form (when it has one) so that I don't forget it.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I enjoy learning character [sic] but find it very daunting. Being faced with so many characters every day/week to internalise is quite scary, but it also motivates me to work very hard.

My primary method is making flashcards. I already have almost 300 and make one every time I come across a new character. I then test myself over and over again to make sure the character, its pinyin and its meaning are all ingested. I carry these flashcards wherever I go so if I have a spare 5 minutes I can get them out and practice. I also have a rough exercise book to use to write the characters out many times and test myself on stroke order. Again, I try to carry this with me so I can always test myself.

I know character learning is the most important thing, and sometimes it is hard to learn all 3 elements (stroke-order, pronunciation and meaning) inside out. It is a long and time-consuming process but I enjoy it as it is quite relaxing as well.

MTW3

If I find a character I cannot remember from a previous week, I take the flashcard and put it in a new pile of high-priority cards that I then revise every day.

I still find character learning fun and enjoy making flashcards as a way to relax though I may need to start investing in some new cards to keep up the supply of flashcards to accommodate the 100s of new characters.

MTW4

This was another hard week with a lot of characters to learn – over 100. It has been hard to stay on top of them, but I have still found that my flashcard technique is the best way to learn. Generally I will go through all the vocab, testing myself as I go along, separating out those characters that need particular attention because they cause persistent problems.

MTW6

My character learning has developed slightly to encourage my memorisation of the full-form characters. For this, I now put both forms on the same flashcard. Learning is however also becoming quicker and easier.

HTW3

My character learning is getting better and I am able to recognise a greater number of modern and classical words. We have stopped covering new characters now and so revision will take precedence from now on so as to prepare for my prelims. For this I have devised a system whereby I will have covered all of my characters over an 8-day rota.

TTW6

I find characters OK to learn in the first place but it is more difficult to retain them if you do not look at/practice them each day whilst also learning new ones.

To learn characters I try to allocate at least a couple of hours each day but sometimes when there is essay pressure/reading or other work to do I don't spend as long on them as I would like and find I sometimes 'half-learn' characters.

I find the more complex characters sometimes easier to remember because I spend longer learning them.

My biggest error is forgetting dashes at the top, e.g. 宀 v 冖, and 白 v 日

This week I learnt the traditional characters at the same time as the simplified ones as opposed to learning them separately, which is what I have done in the past. It seemed to work better this way.

I did start learning characters earlier than in previous weeks which I felt was beneficial.

I have realised learning in small amounts is better. And to do little and often improves memory retention rather than trying to learn a lot at once.

No date

2011-12 Undergraduate14

I enjoy it, but still see writing characters as drawing them; pictorial-view of characters rather than seeing them as words. It has to do maybe with the way I learn them (make stories in order to remember them).

Difficult: trying to remember the stroke order, especially when it feels unnatural to do a certain stroke before another.

MTW3

Getting better at stroke order. Like practising it.

Repetition each night, flashcards before I sleep and during breakfast.

MTW4

1hr per night (allowing time for essays and readings and grammar homework)

Characters are easy to learn. Grammar and Pinyin are most difficult.

MTW7

Repetition, flashcards, make stories about the characters, sentences, and come back to them after a break.

MTW8

Didn't find any problems with regards to complicated (many strokes) characters. Was tricky to remember characters with similar strokes and related meaning.

This term I've been doing the same as last term, except using electronic flashcards which I don't find useful any more.

- *Making stories for the characters to remember them seems the best way for me*
- *Repetition is the only way to really remember them, by doing this daily*

Difficulty is remembering the Pinyin, not the characters.

My method has changed in that I now use a whiteboard to practise and have started to pay attention to the radicals, etc. I find that constant repetition is now the way I learn best.

I've kept going with repetition rather than the more creative approach of making up stories about the characters. I've been repeating them, testing myself every day.

I think vocab/character tests in class would have been useful, especially when I still find the font used to print out the characters in texts and in the green book makes a huge difference sometimes, I've now got to go back and make sure I know all the characters properly and exactly right just in case I've confused myself of [sic] extra 'ticks' or lines. I think in class testing would have helped us a lot along the way.

Other than that I'm confident of my character learning ability and I'll keep on with repetition on my whiteboard until the exams.

2011-12 Graduate2

I make use of the cards to learn characters, I carry them in my bag or coat whenever I go out and look at them at odd moments, e.g. supermarket checkout. I learn how to write (not just recognise) by repeatedly following the stroke order at intervals. I find the most effective way to learn is by full phrases rather than individual words but to do this fully required more vocabulary and recognition ability. I like to spend at least some time on characters every day. Character learning is ultimately very rewarding.

I have been trying to find interesting stories about the characters to help me remember, e.g. yīnguó [sic] de yīng looks like a big box of tea because of having grass radical and something like the character dà. It is hard to make the time to memorise characters with my other course commitments and I find it is not helpful to do characters late at night because I always forget in the morning, so you have to do repeated writing during the day. At the same time, I feel we are reaching the state where we can begin to guess at the meaning and sound of characters we do not know based on the radical and other component [sic]. This is a positive development.

The fact that I was able to remember the characters required for the collection over the holiday just by doing a small amount of work every day was very encouraging to me and showed that the key to success in this language is small amounts of work on a regular basis rather than huge irregular bursts.

I increasingly rely on the radical and phonetic system as the most effective way both to read and memorise characters, and think this method will become yet more effective the more characters we learn. I have soon to learn dictionary skills in order to further develop and exploit my understanding of the radical/phonetic system.

By the end of this term I have basically stopped relying on the method of making up stories around the shape of the characters and am relying on the radical and phonetic system. I feel students would benefit from having this system made clear to them because otherwise it is easy to despair and think that all the individual characters are simply unique.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Graduate3</div>

The characters this week were a little more challenging than last week's. Once again, I found that the most effective way to memorize the characters was to write them over and over again. While this method could become quite tedious at times, I thought that it was the easiest way to commit the brush stokes to memory. In terms of allocating time, I had to spend a lot longer memorizing this week's characters (as well as going over the previous lessons!), but while this has been challenging, I feel like character learning has been the most rewarding and interesting part of the course so far.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I spent a lot of time this week on characters, so I had to make it more a priority than usual.

<div align="right">MTW5</div>

I feel like the characters have been going pretty well. The process of learning characters has probably been the best part of the course so far and I feel like I have been learning a lot. For the most part I feel like I have been keeping up pretty well with the characters, though at times it can be somewhat difficult to refresh my memory since we have already had so many lessons.

<div align="right">HTW6</div>

So once you can recognize a bit of a character it is going to be a lot easier to memorize it since you can partially visualise it before you even need to completely remember it.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

The characters have been very good the further back you go since a lot of the characters actually are similar to the ones that had appeared earlier. The one thing I would say is that it is quite important to go back and review all 50 lessons maybe 1 – 2 times/per week. If I don't do this, I find that I have a tendency to start forgetting the characters I had learned in the weeks of lessons 30 – 40. That being said, this entire process typically takes me about 3 – 4 hours to complete in its entirety.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Gradaute4</div>

Bad. I feel like I am still very behind with character learning. I have trouble balancing the readings for the two other classes + grammar homework + listening comprehension + character learning + sorting out everything for my house. (MTW4) – Bad. The past two weeks I set out to improve allocation of time for character learning, but so far I haven't succeeded. (No date) – over the holidays, I managed to learn 99% of the characters in time for the exam, since the holiday I find that I have once again focussed on grammar homework rather than character learning. This has been problematic and I really need to find a way to balance the two better. (HTW3) – I still find it hard to balance my schedule (HTW6)

What I've learned is that there is not one way for me to learn characters and that a varied approach works best.

As making up stories is not sustainable as the characters become more complex and the number of characters to learn increases too, I have switched to the method of repetition. This is still not easy but I can't find any other way of learning characters at this point.

On the whole, however, characters are not as daunting as they were when I started this degree.

TTW6

2011-12 Graduate5

I spend almost 80% of the time on character learning.

It is difficult to remember the tones in Pinyin. Otherwise it is not too problematic, apart from the time it takes.

MTW3

I believe to know [sic] what each word means. The biggest problem remains assimilating sounds and meaning with the character.

MTW6

2011-12 Graduate6

I enjoy learning characters and find process [sic] of actually writing them rewarding.

Still trying to determine best approach to learn characters – it is huge challenge [sic]. So far I find repeated writing of character [sic] while saying it works; initially write 10-50 times. Then I try to retest later in the day 1-2 times; last time just trying to recall character from English word [sic]. Also, if possible, I will try and place new characters into writing sentence forms which I know.

Yet, major problem is time – I rarely get to do all what [sic] is outlined on previous page. Typically with other coursework demands I can only spend 4 – 5 days a week learning any Chinese.

I do write flashcards for all new characters and try to learn from this – but this doesn't help writing much; recognition is improved but slowly.

MTW3

I have started picking 8 – 15 characters at a time (key words from each week) and writing them a few times. Then I test and retest with flashcards. Then I get together with Chinese friends and ask them to test me and ask me questions based on characters for that week; I give answer [sic] in Chinese and they correct me. This does help with character recognition, although it is more geared towards listening/speaking I suppose.

Flashcard [sic] daily helps me to recall and recognise, though not necessarily write.

MTW4

I write all my characters properly in terms of stroke order however I cannot easily remember about 60% of what I learn.

MTW5

For the first time I'm starting to find myself able to learn/revise characters by doing other homework; that is, re-exposure to characters I have learned (but forgotten) in sentence translation is now helping me actually remember the characters.

Flashcard use is still useful although I still find myself with insufficient time to revise during the week. Once I get to Friday, I feel as though I'd really benefit from revising the week's characters (and grammar) over the weekend. But we always have more to learn so that makes things difficult as I feel inundated.

My characters recognition is definitely getting better more quickly than my ability to generate characters from scratch.

Last, I am finding now that when looking at text only in characters, I am forgetting the correct tones which I was always reminded of in pinyin. This is something I'll have to work on over coming weeks.

<div align="right">MTW7</div>

My comment last week that it's getting easier to recall characters and to learn them "incidentally" through weekly homework still holds true.

<div align="right">MTW8</div>

My technique is now fairly standard: I initially watch the stroke order on my computer; then I write it out (ten at a time) 20 – 40 times; then I go over then [sic] at a time [sic] again, looking and rewriting 20 times; then I test myself covering words in Chinese and recalling English; and then the reverse - which I do 5 times over 2 days. After this, standard palm cards revision seems to work.

Time more than difficulty is the biggest issue.

<div align="right">HTW3</div>

Character <u>learning</u> [sic] now proceeds much more quickly. Recognition of radicals and repeated parts of characters makes learning new words easier. My method is basically unchanged: I wrote a new character 15-30 times at first, revise [sic] rewriting each [sic] another 10 times, and then use [sic] flashcards to test Romanisation.

Character <u>retention</u> however is still very difficult. I still find I rarely have time to revise past characters as often or thoroughly as I would like. Refreshing via flashcard testing takes about 2 hrs per chapter, but having them in mind is a constant struggle.

<div align="right">TTW3</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Graduate7</div>

Try to learn 10 a day then review.

Try to spend 1-2 hours learning the characters each evening.

<div align="right">MTW3</div>

I tried to remember lots of characters in one evening – this did not work very well – my brain felt 'full' after about 15-20 characters.

<div align="right">MTW4</div>

I feel frustrated as I want to spend more time learning characters but don't have any time to do this!

<div align="right">No date</div>

I discovered a new way of learning characters – instead of writing them over and over again, I bought a mini whiteboard and used this to write characters and test myself after I had memorised how to recognize them.

<div align="right">No date</div>

I was quite successful at keeping up with character learning at the beginning of term but have fallen behind towards the end of term because of other deadlines and trips.

<div align="right">No date</div>

I feel that my character learning is more efficient now.

I feel that I learn characters better in the morning and then try to review them in the evening.

<div align="right">No date</div>

I find learning characters much more enjoyable and easier than at the beginning.

I feel as you become more familiar with the radicals and stroke order with basic characters, the easier it is to learn others.

I am still using my method of using a small whiteboard to test my character knowledge every day. In preparation for the exams I think now the main problem is associating the pinyin tones with the characters – while I can often remember how to say the character I cannot remember the correct tones.

I also find that having stories/associations for the characters which are more complicated and less commonly used is very helpful.

<div align="right">TTW6</div>

<div align="right">2011-12 Graduate8</div>