基础五 · Recognise characters and useful components

Chinese Foundations

Two similar characters, two useful clues

A menu has **清水 qīngshuǐ**, plain water, and **请 qǐng**, please, in 请坐, please sit. 清 and 请 share 青 but have different left components. Shape, sound and context work together; one part alone does not give the whole word.

Recognise a few whole characters

Character	Reading	Useful meaning
日	rì	sun; day
月	yuè	moon; month
水	shuǐ	water
火	huǒ	fire
人	rén	person
山	shān	mountain

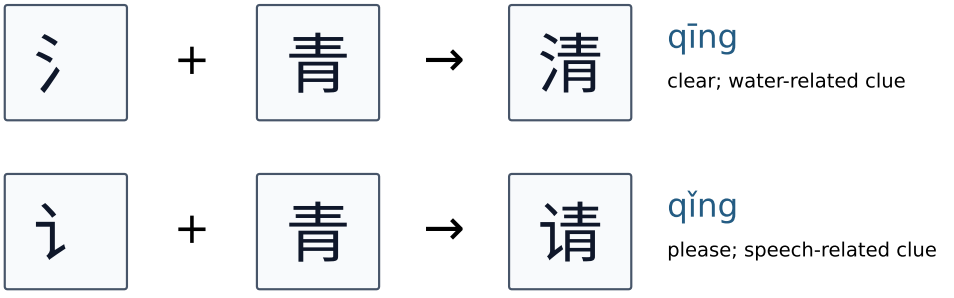
Some characters developed from ancient pictorial forms. Their modern shapes are not literal photographs. A personal memory picture can help recall, but it is not automatically the character's historical origin. Most characters cannot be decoded as pictures.

Meaning components narrow the possibilities

Component	Often associated with	Examples
氵	water and liquids	河 hé, river; 海 hǎi, sea; 清 qīng, clear
口	mouth, speech or related actions	吃 chī, eat; 叫 jiào, call; 喝 hē, drink
木	wood and trees	树 shù, tree; 林 lín, woods

喝 has 口, not 氵. Its connection to drinking does not change the written component. Look at the actual shape before choosing a family. 氵 is a component form of 水 and is not ordinarily a separate word.

Sound components offer a hypothesis



Shared sound clue; different tones

In **清 qīng** and **请 qǐng**, 青 qīng is a useful clue to the syllable qing, but the tones differ. In **妈 mā**, 女 relates to female and 马 mǎ offers a sound clue; their tones also differ. A sound component may reflect older pronunciation, so it does not guarantee a modern reading. Check a dictionary or a reliable model.

Separate recognising, typing and writing

Recognising 清 in a sentence, choosing 清 from a pinyin candidate list and writing 清 from memory are different tasks. For handwriting, use a stroke model and compare proportion, component position and stroke order. Copy once while looking; later close the model and try again. A successful typed choice is not proof of handwriting recall.

A fresh situation

R1. Interpret and repair. A note puts 喝 in the 氵 family because drinking involves water. Correct the component analysis.

R2. Use it yourself. Compare 清 qīng and 请 qǐng: identify what stays the same and what changes, then say what still needs checking.

Write your responses before opening the key. Compare meaning as well as form; a different valid answer need not copy the model.

Answers and explanations

Check after your attempt. For open tasks, compare the message and the stated criteria, then revise one detail.

■ Fresh-situation answers

R1. 喝 has the left component 口, not 氵. Meaning associations cannot replace looking at the strokes. 河 and 海 are valid 氵 examples.

R2. One possible response. Both share 青, a useful qing sound clue. 清 has 氵 and 请 has 讠; the tones differ. Confirm each whole word's reading and meaning in context; a shared component is not a guarantee.

Recall later. Tomorrow, recognise and write 清/请 separately, checking shape, tone and meaning.