CALLIGRAPHY

Calligraphy is more than an art form in East Asia—it is useful for students to learn about the different types of calligraphy, their significance/meaning, and history. Here is a basic chart that covers the history of calligraphy. Examples are all the character 龍:

**Oracle-Bone and Tortoise-SHELL INSCRIPTIONS**
甲骨文 (C. 1500-1100 B.C.)

**Bronze-Vessel and Bell Inscriptions**
鐘鼎文 (C. 1100-221 B.C.)

**Greater Seal Script**
大篆 (403-221 B.C.)

**Lesser Seal Script**
小篆 (221-206)

**Old Scribe**
古隷 (221-206 B.C.)

**Han Scribe**
漢隷 (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)

**Block Script (Standard)**
楷書 C. 4th and 5th Centuries A.D.

**Cursive (“Grass”) Scripts**
草書

**Old Grass Script**
古草 (206 B.C.-A.D. 8)

**Documentary Script**
章草 (25 A.D.-220 A.D.)

**Unconnected**
独草体 4th Century A.D.

**Connected**
連綿体 4th Century A.D.

**Wild**
狂草体 618-907

**Semi-Cursive (“Running”) Script**
行書 (206 B.C.-A.D. 220)

Today, seal script is often used for personal seals (Ch. tǔzhāng 圖章; K. tocang 圖章; J. 印鑑 or 判子), but otherwise is rarely seen. Scribe script is also rarely used. Block, semi-cursive, and cursive are the standard forms used in CJK.
In order to figure out what something is, knowing the stroke order is often very helpful. For example, the cursive form of “wind” 風 (see below right) might seem inscrutable at first, but if you follow the brush strokes with your eyes and do a little reconstructing, it is not hard to guess what the character is.

Informally, there are many abbreviations of characters. (See examples of Chinese abbreviations and Japanese abbreviations). Although some charts of these exist, there is no one convenient reference source to use: one must simply learn them through reading and practice.

Japanese phonetic scripts
It isn’t hard to see how the development of the kana syllabaries in Japan was the direct result of cursive writing. (See Variant Kana Forms) From the Variant Kana Forms chart, you can see that more than one kanji was used phonetically in the days of early Japanese. This means that, as mentioned earlier, in addition to the “standard” kana you have learned, there are also variant forms (called hentaigana 変体仮名). Although you may think them obscure, there are examples of them actually being typeset, which means that they were used regularly. There is a nice page of Japanese hentaigana available online, with examples of hentaigana used in the real world.

Cursive forms of kana are, in their most basic form, the result of NOT lifting one’s brush or pen up off the paper. In its most extreme form, it can look like this.

If you are feeling zealous, you can buy a CD-ROM that will teach you how to read this calligraphy. It is called KanaClassic: An Electronic Guide to Learning Classical Japanese Kana Writing and is published by Columbia University.

Punctuation
Punctuation is relatively new in CJK. In older texts it was often largely omitted because the grammar itself indicated where commas, periods, etc. would be. (Note for Japanese students: the voicing indicators such as in ば & ぱ are also modern. In classical Japanese, one would infer
them from context.) Moreover, traditional punctuation is not always the same as modern. Here are some diacritical and punctuation marks with which you should be familiar:

々 = repetition of the Chinese character directly preceding it. 時々、等々
「」 = quotation marks
『』 = quotation marks
ゝ = repetition of the preceding kana
・ = comma (or emphasis, if placed next to a character)
。 = period
・・ = stop (often transliterated as a colon in English)
〆 = ending (Japanese)
∧ = a repeat of two kana together
《》 = brackets (used like {} are used in English)