

# Chinese Brushstrokes



Chinese artists rely on the basic tools of brush and ink to create expressive landscapes. By changing the saturation and amount of ink, the angle of the brush, and the speed and pressure with which it is applied to paper or silk, they can accomplish a remarkable variety of results. This panel shows different types of linear brushstrokes for texturing rocks and mountains, dots for depicting vegetation and atmospheric effects such as mist, and compositional techniques that provide structure for the painting.



Long and short "hemp fiber" texturing (*pima cun*)



Combination of "straight dot" texturing (*zhidian cun*), "hemp fiber" texturing (*pima cun*), and "axe cut" texturing (*fupi cun*)



"Folded band" texturing (*zhedai cun*)



"Horse tooth" texturing (*maya cun*)



"Mi family" texturing (*Mijia cun*) (modeled after Mi Fu, 1051–1107, and his son Mi Youren, 1086–1165)



"Horizontal dot" texturing (*hengdian cun*)



"Axe cut" texturing (*fupi cun*) for rocks



"Pepper dots" (*hujiao dian*) to depict cypress foliage



Four methods for depicting slopes (*xiepo*): sand slope (*shapo*), stone slope (*shipo*), rocky slope (*tujianshi po*), and earthen slope (*tupo*)



Riverbanks on a level ground plane (*pingpo*)



Strokes used to depict flowing water (*liushui*)



Variations on brushstrokes for distant trees, including "deer horn" (*lujiao*), J-shaped (*jiexi*) and "narrow leaf" (*jiayao*) strokes

## The Chinese Brush

Chinese artists wield the brush differently than their Western counterparts, holding it lightly between the thumb, index, and middle fingers, with the palm cupped to form an open space. This allows for considerable sensitivity in capturing the movements of the hand.

Thank you to Yu Wen for the brushstroke examples and Andy Lee for the brush holding examples.



For most texturing and other linear strokes, the brush is held at a perpendicular angle to the paper. This allows the artist to vary pressure and modulate the width of the line, one of the most fundamental characteristics of Chinese painting.



The brush also can be held at an oblique angle. In landscape painting, this is used for washes and other broad strokes.