**10 MUST-KNOW CHINESE MEASURE WORDS**

1. 个 – gè

When you’re a total Chinese n00b, this measure word will save your life. It can basically be used for everything, and Chinese people will forgive your sorry 老外 ass for only knowing one all-encompassing measure word. It *should* be used for people and/or non-specific items, but you can basically use it all the time. Here are a few examples:

Three foreigners (三个老外 – sān gè lǎo wài)

That beautiful girl (那个美女 – nà gè měi nǚ)

Ten students (十个学生 – shí gè xué shēng)

2. 只 – zhī

If 个 is the go-to measure word for people, then 只 is used for animals. Strangely enough, it’s also used for arms, hands, legs, and feet – body parts that come in pairs. Here’s this common measure word in action:

This dog (这只狗 – zhè zhī gǒu)

Two hands (两只手 – liǎng zhī shǒu)

Five cats (五只猫 – wǔ zhī māo)

3. 条 – tiáo

The best way to remember how to use this important measure word is that it is often connected with long, narrow, or skinny objects – fish, roads, pants, rivers, and so on. Check these examples:

Ten fish (十条鱼 – shí tiáo yú)

This river (这条河 – zhè tiáo hé)

Two pairs of pants (两条裤子 – liǎng tiáo kù zi)

You’re probably wondering if there’s a Chinese measure word that is the equivalent of “pair” in English, and why it’s not used for pants. Well, I can’t answer the second question, but there is in fact a word for “pair.”

4. 双 – shuāng

As mentioned above, this is the Chinese equivalent of “pair” in English. Here are a few examples:

A pair of chopsticks (一双筷子 – yī shuāng kuài zi)

That pair of shoes (那双鞋 – nà shuāng xié)

Two pairs of gloves (两双手套 – liǎng shuāng shǒu tào)

5. 辆 – liàng

This measure word is used for vehicles with wheels, but not trains. You can use it to talk about cars, bikes, and the like, though. Let’s see it in action:

Three bicycles (三辆自行车 – sān liàng zì xíng chē)

Five cars (五辆车 – wǔ liàng chē)

This electric bikes (这辆电动车 – zhè liàng diàn dòng chē)

6. 张 – zhāng

It’s pretty easy remembering how to use this measure word, as it is attached to flat objects – tables, paper, tickets, etc. You’ll find that you use this one quite often if you live in China, as you’ll always be buying subway, bus, or train tickets.

One soft sleeper ticket (一张硬卧票 – yī zhāng yìng wò piào)

Three tables (三张桌子 – sān zhāng zhuō zi)

Five bus tickets (五张车票 – wǔ zhāng chē piào)

7. 本 – běn

While you use 张 for a single sheet of paper, you need to use a different measure word when talking about things like books, magazines, or notebooks. That’s where 本 comes in handy! Here are some examples:

This newspaper (这本报纸 – zhè běn bào zhǐ)

Ten books (十本书 – shí běn shū)

One magazine (一本杂志 – yī běn zá zhì)

8. 家 – jiā

This is a very versatile Chinese character – it can mean “home” or “family,” and it can also be used as a measure word. In this context, it is attached to gatherings of people, or establishments (shops, restaurants, etc.) Let’s see how it’s used:

This company (这家公司 – zhè jiā gōng sī)

Four restaurants (四家饭店 – sì jiā fàn diàn)

A bar (一家酒吧 – yī jiā jiǔ bā)

9. 瓶 – píng; 杯 – bēi

We’re going to put these two measure words together and relate them to the last example, as these are both very handy in a bar/restaurant. The first (瓶) means “bottle,” and the second (杯) means “glass.” This way you can distinguish between “a bottle of beer” and “a glass of wine.”

A bottle of beer (一瓶啤酒 – yī píng pí jiǔ)

A glass of red wine (一杯红酒 – yī bēi hóng jiǔ)

That bottle of water (那瓶水 – nà píng shuǐ)

10. 件 – jiàn

This measure word can be used in a few ways – with clothing, gifts, or matters/problems. Don’t ask me how all of those things are connected, because I couldn’t tell you!

This shirt (这件衬衫 – zhè jiàn chèn shān)

One matter/thing/problem (一件事 – yī jiàn shì)

Three gifts (三件礼物 – sān jiàn lǐ wù)

Of course, there are tons more measure words in Chinese, but if you can master these ten, you’ll be well on your way to being a measure word expert!