



tú piàn yóu guó jì wǎng lù qǔ dé
Figure 1: 圖片由國際網路取得
(Picture obtained through the Internet)

wénfáng sì bǎo

C012 文房四寶 (The Four Treasures of a Study)

Traditionally, a student needs these four essential items to go to school. I say “go to school”, but of course, in the old times, a school might have only a dozen or so students and only one teacher. Those private schools are called “私塾。”

Both the writing tools and the school systems underwent tremendous changes in the past century. Nobody will think of going back to the 私塾 mentioned above; however, the writing tools are still treasured by many who want to keep on these beautiful cultural traditions.

The Four Treasures are:

- 1) 筆 (the writing brushes)
- 2) 墨 (the ink stick)
- 3) 紙 (paper)
- 4) 硯 (the ink stand) (the ink stand serves the function of a mortar; however, instead of pounding, one slides the flat tip of the ink stick around on the flat surface of the shallow well together with water until enough ink is produced. During a sitting, one might have to do this several times to cater to the needed ink demand.)

Now, identify the Four Treasures by looking at the picture. What are the two items (actually three – two of them are a pair) that are not essential?