Chinese Mandarin
(Beginners Term A - Getting Started)
普通话
pǔtōnghuà

Welcome to your Course

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Course code: A6126
Term A: 23rd Sep - 2nd Dec 2026 (10 weeks)
Half Term: 28th Oct (no class)
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Password: Idea2026

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LESSON A.1 - PART 1

BASIC GREETINGS

问候 WÈNHÒU

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WELCOME

欢迎 *huānyíng*	Welcome
你好吗? *nǐ hǎo ma **	How are you?
好，你呢? *hǎo , nǐ ne*	Fine, how about you?
还好，谢谢！ *hái hǎo, xièxiè*	OK, thanks!

Note: for two 3rd tones in a row, change the first one to 2nd tone

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LEARN CHINESE

学中文
xué zhōngwén

Learn Chinese

说普通话
shuō pǔtōnghuà

Speak Mandarin

中国文化
zhōngguó wénhuà

Chinese culture

很难！
hěn nán!

It's difficult!

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LESSON A.1 - PART 2

PINYIN (BASIC)

拼音PĪNYĪN

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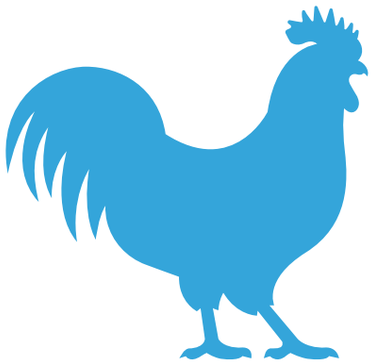
PINYIN "SPELL SOUND"

- Pinyin is a **romanized** phonetic writing system for Mandarin based on the national **standard** system of pronunciation.
- It was **officially** adopted by the Chinese government in 1958 to help speakers of other dialects learn the standard pronunciation.
- Every Chinese character is made up of one-syllable sound. A Pinyin syllable has 3 components: an **initial** (usually consonant), a **final** (vowel) and a **tone** mark that indicates the pitch contour. There are 21 initials, 35 finals and 4 tones.

***Example**: jī as pronunciation for "**chicken**"*



jī 鸡

Tone

Initial

Final

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INITIALS

- Initials are always placed at the beginning of a syllable. They are similar to consonants in English. They can be divided into 6 groups based on their phonetic characteristics.

b-, p-, m-, f- (Labials)

Pronounced like baw, paw, maw, faw

- Formed using the lips.

d-, t-, n-, l- (Dentals)

Pronounced like duh, tuh, nuh, luh

- Formed with the tongue touching or near the back of the upper teeth

g-, k-, h- (Velars)

Pronounced like guh, kuh, huh

- Formed from the throat.

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INITIALS

j-, q-, x- (Frontals)

Pronounced as gee, chee, shee

- Formed with the tip of the tongue directly against the back of the lower teeth. Unlike English, the tip of the tongue does not touch the roof of the mouth. The lips must be tight and pulled widely apart, as in a forced smile.

z-, c-, s- (Aveolars)

Pronounced as dzeh, tseh, seh

- Formed with the upper teeth in contact with the upper front surface of the tongue.

zh-, ch-, sh-, r- (Retroflexes)

Pronounced like jir, chir, shir, rj

- Formed with the tip of the tongue rolled upward and touching the roof of the mouth. When you say r in Mandarin, the lip should be less open than in English. You will feel the air vibrating around your tongue. Your lower jaw is thrust slightly forward.

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FINALS

- Finals are composed of up to 4 letters.
- They are made from 6 single vowels (**a, e, i, o, u, ü**), which can be combined with 3 consonant endings (**n, ng, r**)

Example: *b + ang to form bang*

as pronunciation for "help"

Final	Pronunciation
-a	ah
-ai	i
-an	ahn
-ang	ahng
-ao	ow
-e	uh
-ei	ay

Final	Pronunciation
-en	un
-eng	ung
-er	ur
-o	aw
-ong	awng
-ou	oh

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LESSON A.1 - PART 3

TONES

音YĪN

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TONES

- Mandarin Chinese has 4 tones and a neutral tone.
- The tone you use when pronouncing each one-syllable word determines the meaning.

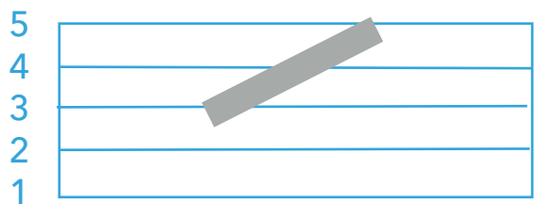
1st tone

5-5

high pitch, hold flat

2nd tone

3-5



rising from low to high

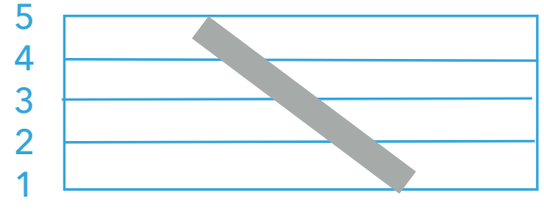
3rd tone

2-1-4

low - dipping - rising

4th tone

5-1



falls from high to low

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Placing Tone Mark

- In general, a tone mark is placed above the first vowel.

Example: *bāo, báo, bǎo, bào*

- Exception is **i**, **u**, or **ü**, where the tone mark is placed above the second vowel.

Example: *jiǔ, guì, yuán*

Neutral Tone

- Neutral tone has no tone mark, and is unstressed.
- A neutral tone always follows a major-toned syllable and never comes at the beginning of a phrase.

Example: *wǒmen as "we" 我们*

Tone Change: 3+3 → 2+3

- If a 3rd tone is followed by another 3rd tone, the first 3rd tone is pronounced as a 2nd tone although the printed tone mark does not change.

Example: ***nǐ hǎo → ní hǎo*** *as "hello" 你好*

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CULTURE – THE UNDER-MEANING OF “GOOD”

What’s good about “good”

- In Chinese, the character 好 consists of "girl" and "boy" in short form, which is the ideal unison in Chinese culture.
- The complete form is as below
  - "Girl" - 女孩 nǚhái
  - "Boy" - 男孩 nánhái or short as 子 zi
  - "Woman" - 女人nǚrén
  - "Man" - 男人nánrén

Girl	+	Boy	=	Good
女 *nǚ*		子 *zi*		好 *hǎo*

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CLASSROOM EXERCISE A.1 – PINYIN

1. Can you guess the meaning(s) of each pinyin?

bāo	báo	bǎo	bào
饱 (full)	包 (bun)	爆 (explode)	宝 (treasure)	薄 (thin)

2. Can you guess how to pronounce “baby” in the correct tone?

baobao

宝宝

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