



Chinese (Mandarin)

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Introduction / 介绍

About Chinese

The **Chinese language** (汉语/漢語, 华语/華語 or 中文) is a member of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. Chinese is a tonal language, meaning that pitch is used to distinguish words. About one-fifth of the world speaks some form of Chinese as its native language,



中华人民共和国 (中国)
People's Republic of China (China)



中華民國 (臺灣)
Republic of China (R.O.C)



新加坡共和国 (新加坡)
Republic of Singapore (Singapore)

making it the most common language in the world. The Chinese language (spoken in its **Standard Mandarin** form) is the official language of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan), one of four official languages of Singapore, and one of six official languages of the United Nations. It is also the form of Chinese that will be taught in this wikibook.

Chinese is considered by many to be a language that is difficult to learn, mainly because its grammar operates along very different principles compared to European languages (for example, you will see no tenses, plurals, or subject-verb agreement, but you will see counter words, reduplication rules, and verb completion/direction suffixes). In addition, Chinese is one of the few languages in the world that does not use an alphabet or a syllabary; instead, thousands of characters are used, each representing a word or a part of a word. The government of China has developed a system of writing Chinese in the Roman alphabet, known as *Hanyu Pinyin* (汉语拼音/漢語拼音, "spelling according to sounds"). Hanyu Pinyin is used to write out Chinese names in English (for example, "Beijing", "Shanghai", etc.) and helps learners of Chinese with their pronunciation. This wikibook will teach you Hanyu Pinyin first, before any actual sentences. All examples and new vocabulary will always be given together with Hanyu Pinyin.

There are two character sets: Simplified Chinese characters (简体字) and Traditional Chinese (正體字 or 繁體字). Traditional Chinese was the writing used in much of Chinese history, and continues to be used in Hong Kong, Macau, Republic of China(Taiwan) and among overseas Chinese; Simplified Chinese was the result of reforms carried out in Mainland China and is now used in Mainland China and Singapore. There are some large differences between these two character systems, so most native Chinese speakers are able to write in only one of the two systems, though they can usually read both. However, it's much easier for people who learn Traditional Chinese to read both sets than people who learn simplified Chinese only, as simplified Chinese doesn't make sense in some contexts. This wikibook will introduce both sets of writing. It's recommended that you learn to write one of them, and read both.

Chinese characters were also been used in the past by many Asian countries, and still being used by some of them till today. Ancient Koreans knew how to read and write in Chinese and they also regarded Chinese their official language in the past, until they have made Korean characters their own language. However, until now they can still write their names in Chinese. The Japanese still preserve many Chinese characters (they call it Kanji, which means 漢字) today. They also write their names in Kanji. However, some Chinese characters are developed by themselves which are different from the original Chinese characters.

This textbook will assume that you have no prior knowledge of Chinese, but are willing to take Chinese as a serious subject of study. Each lesson contains a combination of new vocabulary and new grammar in a gradual fashion, building on previous lessons. Each lesson's material should be appropriate for a week's worth of daily classes.

Each lesson consists of five parts:

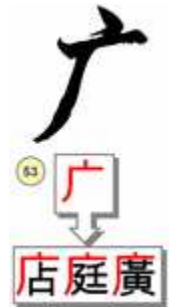
1. **Dialogue.** Here you will see a dialogue carried out by two or more people. All texts are given in 4 versions: Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Hanyu Pinyin, and an English translation.
2. **Grammar.** This section breaks down all of the new sentence structures introduced in the dialogue and shows example sentences to reinforce them.
3. **Vocabulary.** New vocabulary for the lesson, with translation and pronunciation. Every newly introduced character will be linked to an image or animation showing its stroke order.
4. **Examples.** A page of sentences and phrases giving more examples based on the lesson material.
5. **Exercises.** Questions and activities to test comprehension of the material. May be used as homework or as review material for lesson exams.

Speaking and Pronunciation

- **Pay attention to the tones.** Since there are so few syllables in Chinese, there are many homonyms, making attention to tones very important. Learning to write the pinyin with correct tones at the same time as the characters will improve your pronunciation and your listening comprehension.
- **Read the text aloud.** Speaking (and hearing yourself speaking) will help reinforce the text in your memory. Exaggerating the tones can help you remember them.

Reading and Writing

- **Practice writing. A lot.** When you learn, write each character at least ten times every week until you can remember it. Quiz yourself periodically to test your memory and to find which characters you need more practice on. As you write, think of the sound and meaning of the character, or say it out loud. Check out the [East Asian Orthography](#) wikibook for more help with Chinese writing. Learn the right stroke order initially and write carefully, looking at the printed character each time before copying.
- **Look for radicals.** [Radicals](#) are components of Chinese characters that you will see repeated over and over again. Learning the meaning of radicals will help you to see the connections between similar categories of words. Many characters are comprised of radical-phonetic pairings, where the radical is the "root" that hints at the meaning of the word, while another part of the character hints at the sound of the word. Learning to spot radicals is also useful as they are used when looking up unfamiliar words in Chinese dictionaries.
- **Buy a dictionary.** Useful for looking up new words or just browsing. Get a beginner's dictionary so that you can have a larger font, usage examples and Pinyin pronunciation, all of which are sometimes missing in comprehensive dictionaries. Get a second dictionary later on if you can't find every word you need. A good choice that provides many example sentences and phrases would be [The Starter Oxford Chinese Dictionary](#) (sorry, Simplified version only).



A radical highlighted in 3 characters

Suggested Reading Materials

- Children's story books (the characters are easier, many include pinyin or zhuyin for difficult or even all characters)
- Take a look at various condensed dictionaries to get a feel for the characters

Pronunciation

This lesson shows the pronunciation of pinyin, the standard Romanization system used for Mandarin Chinese and the one that will be used throughout the textbook. While most of the letters are the same or very close to the English usage, there are some important differences.

Pronunciation Basics

Mandarin Chinese may sound strange, but is actually relatively easy for English-speakers to pick up—much easier than it is for Mandarin-speakers to learn English. A large part of the reason is that Chinese has a very limited syllabary, meaning there are not many sounds in the language, and hardly any new ones if you already know English. On the other hand, that means Chinese-speakers trying to grasp English must learn to create dozens of entirely new sounds—remember that as you proceed through these first lessons on pronunciation!

One very different aspect of Chinese is its use of [tones](#). Because of its limited syllabary, pitches of voice are used to help differentiate words. While some dialects of Chinese have up to nine tones, Mandarin is comparatively easy with only four. It's often difficult for beginners to distinguish the tone of a word, especially when not sure of the context. Even if you have perfect pitch, it may be hard to follow or reproduce what can seem like a rollercoaster ride of tonal transitions. Don't worry though, as you'll improve with practice. These lessons will describe how to understand and reproduce all the syllables and tones of Chinese.

A note about IPA

The [IPA](#), or International Phonetic Alphabet, is a standard set of symbols that can be used to write *any* sound from *any* human language. If you know the IPA, it will be used here to give you a grounding in [pinyin](#)—the most common Romanization system for Chinese, which will be used for the rest of the text.

The Mandarin syllable

There are three parts to all syllables in Mandarin; the [initial](#), the [final](#), and the *tone*. In pinyin, the tone, initial, and final are represented as follows:

Tone

The **tone** is represented by a tone mark placed on top of the syllable. There are exactly four tone marks: $\bar{\quad}$, $\acute{\quad}$, $\check{\quad}$, and $\grave{\quad}$. The two dots on \ddot{u} (like a German umlaut) do not have to do with the tone, so if you see \bar{u} , \acute{u} , \check{u} , or \grave{u} , the symbol *above* the dots represents the tone.

Initial

The **initial** is:

- at the front of the syllable
- a consonant (not including *y*, or *w*)
- usually one letter, except for: *zh*, *ch*, *sh*

Final

The **final** is made up of the letter(s) after a syllable's initial, not including the tone mark.

A final:

- begins with a vowel
- can be made of 1-4 characters
- end with a vowel, *n*, *ng*, or *r*

Exceptions to initial-final combinations in syllables

Some syllables have no initial or no final. In Pinyin, this is shown as follows:

- **For syllables with no final:**
 - an unpronounced *i* is added to the the end of the syllable
 - Occurs only with the following initials: *zh*, *ch*, *sh*, *r*, *z*, *c*, *s*
- **For syllables with no initial:**
 - if the final begins with an *i*, it is replaced with a *y*
 - if the final begins with an *u*, it is replaced with a *w*
 - if the final begins with an *ü*, it is replaced with *yu*
 - **Exceptions to the above:**
 - *i* alone is replaced by *yi*
 - *iu* is replaced by *you*
 - *in* is replaced by *yin*
 - *ing* is replaced by *yíng*
 - *u* alone is replaced by *wu*
 - *ui* is replaced by *wei*
 - *un* is replaced by *wen*
 - *ueng* is replaced by *wéng*

One other exception:

- when combined with initials *j*, *q*, any *ü* in a final is changed to *u*

Please note that the pronunciation of these syllables are not according to the English pronunciation of the letters. The next few pages give examples of how initials and finals are pronounced, put together, and how to use tones.

Pronunciation of initials

Pinyin	IPA	Explanation
<i>b</i>	[p]	unaspirated p , as in spit
<i>p</i>	[p ^h]	as in English
<i>m</i>	[m]	as in English
<i>f</i>	[f]	as in English
<i>d</i>	[t]	unaspirated t , as in stand
<i>t</i>	[t ^h]	as in English
<i>n</i>	[n]	as in English
<i>l</i>	[l]	as in English
<i>g</i>	[k]	unaspirated k , as in skill
<i>k</i>	[k ^h]	as in English
<i>h</i>	[x]	like the English h if followed by "a"; otherwise it is pronounced more roughly (not unlike the Scots ch)
<i>j</i>	[tɕ]	like q , but unaspirated. (To get this sound, first take the sound halfway between joke and check , and then slowly pass it backwards along the tongue until it is entirely clear of the tongue tip.) While this exact sound is not used in English, the closest match is the j in ajar , not the s in Asia ; this means that "Beijing" is pronounced like "bay-jing", not like "beige-ing".
<i>q</i>	[tɕ ^h]	like church ; pass it backwards along the tongue until it is free of the tongue tip
<i>x</i>	[ç]	like sh , but take the sound and pass it backwards along the tongue until it is clear of the tongue tip; very similar to the final sound in German ich , Portuguese enxada , luxo , xícara , puxa , and to huge or Hugh in some English dialects
<i>zh</i>	[tʂ]	ch with no aspiration (take the sound halfway between joke and church and curl it upwards); very similar to merger in American English, but not voiced
<i>ch</i>	[tʂ ^h]	as in chin , but with the tongue curled upwards; very similar to nurture in American English, but strongly aspirated
<i>sh</i>	[ʂ]	as in shinbone , but with the tongue curled upwards; very similar to undershirt in American English
<i>r</i>	[ʐ] or [ʑ]	similar to the English r in rank , but with the lips spread and with the tongue curled upwards
<i>z</i>	[ts]	unaspirated c (halfway between beds and bets), (more common example is suds)
<i>c</i>	[ts ^h]	like ts , aspirated (more common example is cats)
<i>s</i>	[s]	as in sun

Pronunciation of finals

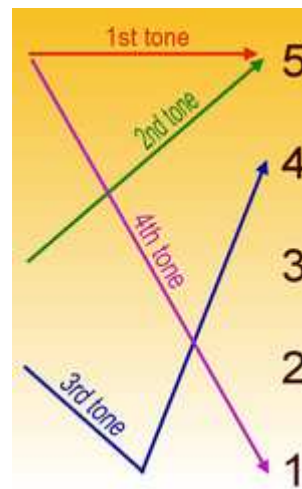
Pinyin	IPA	Final-only form	Explanation
<i>a</i>	[ɑ]	a	if ending a syllable, then as in "father"
<i>o</i>	[ɔ]	o	as in "so" (but shorter than ou)
<i>e</i>	[ɤ], [ə]	e	when occurring at the end of a syllable and not in the combinations of <i>ie</i> , <i>üe</i> , <i>ue</i> , then a backward, unrounded vowel, which can be formed by first pronouncing a plain continental "o" (AuE and NZE law) and then spreading the lips without changing the position of the tongue. That same sound is also similar to English " duh ", but not as open. Many unstressed syllables in Chinese use the schwa (<i>idea</i>), and this is also written as <i>e</i> .
<i>ê</i>	[ɛ]	(n/a)	as in "bet". Only used in certain interjections.
<i>ai</i>	[aɪ]	ai	like English "eye", but a bit lighter
<i>ei</i>	[ei]	ei	as in "hey"
<i>ao</i>	[ɑʊ]	ao	approximately as in "cow"; the <i>a</i> is much more audible than the <i>o</i>
<i>ou</i>	[oʊ]	ou	as in "so"
<i>an</i>	[an]	an	starts with plain continental "a" (AuE and NZE bud) and ends with "n"
<i>en</i>	[ən]	en	as in "taken"
<i>ang</i>	[ɑŋ]	ang	as in German <i>Angst</i> , including the English loan word <i>angst</i> (starts with the vowel sound in <i>father</i> and ends in the velar nasal ; like <i>song</i> in American English)
<i>eng</i>	[ɤŋ]	eng	like <i>e</i> above but with <i>ng</i> added to it at the back
<i>er</i>	[aɹ]	er	like <i>ar</i> (exists only on own, or as last part of final in combination with others- see bottom of list)
<i>i</i>	[i]	yi	like English "ee", except when preceded by "c", "ch", "r", "s", "sh", "z" or "zh"; in these cases it should be pronounced as a natural extension of those sounds in the same position, but slightly more open to allow for a clear-sounding vowel to pass through
<i>ia</i>	[ia]	ya	as i + a ; like English " y ard"
<i>io</i>	[ioʊ]	yo	as i + o ; like English slang " y o"; (you will only see this as in final-only form " y o")
<i>ie</i>	[iɛ]	ye	as i + ê ; but is very short; <i>e</i> (pronounced like <i>ê</i>) is pronounced longer and carries the main stress (similar to the initial sound ye in yet)
<i>iai</i>	[iaɪ]	yai	as i + ai ; like " yi " in " yikes "; (you will only see this as in final-only form " yai ")
<i>iao</i>	[iaʊ]	yao	as i + ao

<i>iu</i>	[iou]	yo	as i + ou
<i>ian</i>	[iɛn]	yian	as i + an ; like English yen
<i>in</i>	[iən]	yin	as i + en
<i>iang</i>	[iaŋ]	yang	as i + ang
<i>ing</i>	[iɤŋ]	ying	as i + eng
<i>u</i>	[u]	wu	like English "oo"
<i>ua</i>	[ua]	wa	as u + a
<i>uo</i>	[uo]	wo	as u + o ; the <i>o</i> is pronounced shorter and lighter than in the <i>o</i> final
<i>uai</i>	[uai]	wai	as u + ai
<i>ui</i>	[uei]	wei	as u + ei ; here, the <i>i</i> is pronounced like <i>ei</i>
<i>uan</i>	[uan]	wan	as u + an
<i>un</i>	[uən]	wen	as u + en ; like the <i>on</i> in the English <i>won</i>
<i>uang</i>	[uaŋ]	wang	as u + ang ; like the <i>ang</i> in English <i>angst</i> or <i>anger</i>
<i>ong</i>	[uɤŋ]	weng	as u + eng ; starts with the vowel sound in book and ends with the velar nasal sound in sing
<i>ü</i>	[y]	yu	as in German " ü ben" or French " lune " (To get this sound, say "ee" with rounded lips)
<i>üe</i>	[yɛ]	yue	as ü + ê ; the <i>ü</i> is short and light
<i>üan</i>	[yan]	yuan	as ü + an ;
<i>ün</i>	[yən]	yun	as ü + en ;
<i>iong</i>	[yɤŋ]	yong	as ü + eng ;

Using Tones

[Image: Relative pitch changes of the four tones]

Every syllable in Chinese has a clearly defined pitch of voice associated with it to distinguish words with the same sound from each other. Unfortunately, there is no indication of the tone given when reading a character, so the tones for words must be individually memorized. To help with this, pinyin uses four easily-remembered diacritical marks to tell you what the tones of words are. The diagram to the right shows the pitch changes of the four tones on a five-bar scale going from lowest (1), to highest (5), while the four tone marks are:

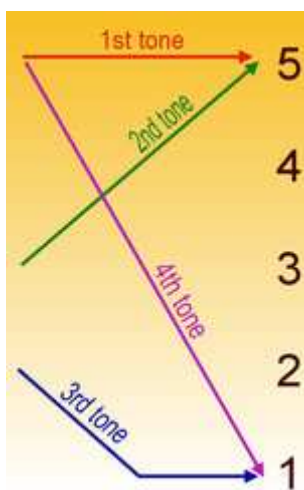


1. **First tone** (ˉ), high level.
2. **Second tone** (ˊ), middle rising.
3. **Third tone** (ˋ), low dipping.
4. **Fourth tone** (ˋ), high falling.

There is also a neutral, so-called "fifth tone", which is unstressed and usually goes unmarked.

Tones marks are always placed over vowels, never consonants. If there is more than one vowel in the syllable, the mark first goes over the a, e, i, o and u respectively (alphabetical order). The only exception to this rule is when a syllable with "iu" needs a tone mark, in which case the mark is placed over the "u", not the "i".

Tone changes



[Image: The shape of the 3rd tone when before 1st, 2nd and 4th tones]

The third tone, with its dip-and-rebound, is hard to fit into a continuous sentence. This is why the third-tone *changes* depending on its environment. There are two rules:

1. If a third tone comes *before another third tone*, then it is pronounced as a second tone.
2. If a third tone comes *before any other tone*, then it only dips, and doesn't rebound and is called a half-third tone (see image).

Because of these broad rules, *the majority* of third tones you

encounter will be second tones or half-third tones. Be mindful of this because the tone marks remain unchanged despite differences in actual pronunciation from the written tone marks.

Syllables with no tone

Some syllables don't have a tone. Those syllables are not stressed, and they take their tone from the syllable before them:

1. If it follows a first- or second-tone syllable, then the toneless syllable is mid-range. (Say *ah...* in a relaxed tone, as if you've been sedated.)
2. If it follows a third-tone syllable, then the toneless syllable is high, as if the dip-and-rebound of the third-tone continues right into it. (Say *w-e-ll* with a break in the middle: *weh—ell*. That's a third-tone syllable plus a toneless syllable.)
3. If it follows a fourth-tone syllable, then the toneless syllable is low, as if the fall of the fourth-tone continues right into it. (Say *Stop!!!* with a break in the middle: *Sto-op!*. That's a fourth-tone syllable plus a toneless syllable.)

Lesson 1: 你好!

It is appropriate to start off the introduction to Chinese with the common greeting: 你好。 Below is a dialogue between two people meeting each other for the first time.

Dialogue 1

Simplified Characters

金妮: 你好。
欧文: 妮好。
金妮: 我叫金妮。你叫什么名字?
欧文: 我叫欧文。

Pīnyīn

Jīnní: Nǐ hǎo.
Ōuwén: Nǐ hǎo.
Jīnní: Wǒ jiào Jīnní. Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?
Ōuwén: Wǒ jiào Ōuwén.

Traditional Characters

金妮: 你好。
歐文: 妳好。
金妮: 我叫金妮。你叫什麼名字?
歐文: 我叫歐文。

English

Ginny: Hello.
Owen: Hello.
Ginny: I'm Ginny. What's your name?
Owen: I'm Owen.

Dialogue 2

Simplified Characters

金妮: 他们是谁?
欧文: 她是艾美, 她是中国人。他是东尼, 是美国人。
金妮: 你也是美国人吗?
欧文: 不是, 我是英国人。你呢? 你是哪国人?
金妮: 我是法国人。

Pīnyīn

Jīnní: Tāmen shì shéi?
Ōuwén: Tā shì Àiměi, tā shì Zhōngguó rén.

Traditional Characters

金妮: 他們是誰?
歐文: 她是艾美, 她是中國人。他是東尼, 是美國人。
金妮: 你也是美國人嗎?
歐文: 不是, 我是英國人。妳呢? 妳是哪國人?
金妮: 我是法國人。

English

Ginny: Who are they?
Owen: She is Amy. She's Chinese. He's

Tā shì Dōngní, shì Měiguórén.

Jīnní: Nǐ yě shì Měiguórén ma?

Ōuwén: Bú shì. Wǒ shì Yīngguórén. Nǐ ne?

Nǐ shì nǎ guó rén?

Jīnní: Wǒ shì Fǎguórén.

Tony, an American.

Ginny: Are you also American?

Owen: No, I'm British. How about you?

Which nationality are you?

Ginny: I'm French.

Vocabulary

Simplified (traditional in parentheses)	Pīnyīn	Part of speech	English [m.]
1. 你 (m.=你, f.=妳)	nǐ	(pro)	you (singular)
2. 好	hǎo	(adj)	good
3. 们 (們)	men	(n suffix)	(pluralizing suffix for pronouns)
4. 你们 (f.=妳们)	nǐmen	(pro)	you (plural)
5. 我	wǒ	(pro)	I, me
6. 我们	wǒmen	(pro)	we, us
7. 他	tā	(pro)	he, him
8. 她	tā	(pro)	she, her
9. 他们 (f.=她们)	tāmen	(pro)	they, them
10. 叫	jiào	(v)	to be named
11. 什么 (什麼)	shénme	(pro)	what
12. 名字	míngzi	(n)	name
13. 是	<u>shì</u>	(v)	to be (am/is/are)
14. 谁 (誰)	shéi; shuí	(pro)	who, whom
15. 国 (國)	guó	(n)	country
16. 人	rén	(n)	person [个 (個) gè]
17. 也	yě	(adv)	also
18. 吗 (嗎)	ma	(part)	(question particle)
19. 呢	ne	(part)	(question particle for known context)
20. 哪	nǎ; něi	(pro)	what, which
21. 不	bù	(adv)	(negates verbs)]

Proper Nouns

Simplified (traditional in Pīnyīn parentheses)		English
1. 金妮	Jīnní	Ginny
2. 欧文 (歐文)	Ōuwén	Owen
3. 艾美	Àiměi	Amy
4. 东尼 (東尼)	Dōngní	Tony
5. 中国 (中國)	Zhōngguó	China
6. 美国 (美國)	Měiguó	America
7. 英国 (英國)	Yīngguó	Britain
8. 法国 (法國)	Fǎguó; Fàguó (in Taiwan)	France

Grammar

Basic Sentences

The sentence structure of Chinese is very similar to that of English in that they both follow the pattern of [Subject-Verb-Object](#) (SVO). Unlike many languages, verbs in Chinese aren't conjugated and noun and adjective endings don't change. They are never affected by things such as time or person.

S + V + O

1. 我叫艾美。

Wǒ jiào Àiměi.
I'm called Amy.



Note that in Chinese you do not need the auxiliary verb *to be* to use other verbs as in English. While the sentence is translated as "I *am* called Amy", saying "我是叫艾美" would be considered awkward.

Sentences using shì [是]

Shì, the equational verb *to be*, can be used as the English *is* or *equals*. Shì can only be used to equate combinations of nouns, noun phrases, and pronouns. In Chinese, shì, the "to be" verb, is not used with adjectives, as it is in English, as in, "He is cold."

S + 是 + O

1. 我是中国人。

Wǒ shì Zhōngguó rén.
I am a Chinese person.

2. 她是金妮。

Tā shì Jīnní.
She is Ginny.

3. 她们是英国人。

Tāmen shì Yīngguó rén.
They are English.

Shì is negated when preceded by bù [不]. Bù is normally 4th tone, but changes to a 2nd tone when it precedes another 4th tone.

S + 不 + 是 + O

1. 他不是东尼。

Tā bú shì Dōngní.
He is not Tony.

2. 我不是美国人。

Wǒ bú shì Měiguó rén.
I am not American.

The question particle ma [吗]

Adding the modal particle ma [吗] to the end of a sentence makes a statement into a question. There is no change in word order as in English.

The declarative example sentence in #1 is transformed into an interrogative in #2.

1. 她是金妮。

Tā shì Jīnní.
She is Ginny.

2. 她是金妮吗?

Tā shì Jīnní ma?
Is she Ginny?

The question particle ne [呢]

Using the ending modal particle ne [呢] makes a question when the context is already known, similar to saying "How about...?" in English. A common circumstance is when you wish to repeat a question that was just asked for another subject. Simply add ne to the end of the noun or pronoun to ask "How about *this*".

1. 我叫东尼, 你呢?

Wǒ jiào Dōngní, nǐ ne?
I'm called Tony. How about you?

2. 艾美是中国人, 他呢?

Àiměi shì Zhōngguó rén, tā ne?
Amy is Chinese. How about him?

Question words

Like particles, question words make statements into questions without changing the order of the sentence. To make one, simply substitute the QW in for the place the subject would be in the answer.

1. 他们是哪国人?

Tāmen shì nǎ guó rén?
What country are they from?

2. 谁是美国人?

Shéi shì Měiguó rén?
Who is American?

3. 她是谁?

Tā shì shéi?
Who is she?

Lesson 2: 今天你忙不忙?

Lesson 2 contains a dialogue of two students discussing their classes for the day.

Dialogues 1 & 2: Characters

Simplified Characters

东尼: 艾美, 早安。
艾美: 早。你好吗?
东尼: 我很好, 谢谢。你呢?
艾美: 我也很好。今天你忙不忙?
东尼: 今天我很忙。我有五节课。
艾美: 五节?! 太多了! 今天我只有一节。
东尼: 一节?! 太少了!

Traditional Characters

東尼: 艾美, 早安。
艾美: 早。你好嗎?
東尼: 我很好, 謝謝。妳呢?
艾美: 我也很好。今天你忙不忙?
東尼: 今天我很忙。我有五節課。
艾美: 五節?! 太多了! 今天我只有一節。
東尼: 一節?! 太少了!

Dialogues 1 & 2: Pīnyīn/English

Pīnyīn

Dōngní: Àiměi, zǎoān.
Àiměi: Zǎo. Nǐ hǎo ma?
Dōngní: Wǒ hěn hǎo, xièxie. Nǐ ne?
Àiměi: Wǒ yě hěn hǎo. Jīntiān nǐ máng bù máng?
Dōngní: Jīntiān wǒ hěn máng. Wǒ yǒu wǔ jié kè.
Àiměi: Wǔ jié?! Tài duō le! Jīntiān wǒ zhǐ yǒu yì jié.
Dōngní: Yì jié?! Tài shǎo le!

English

Tony: Good morning, Amy.
Amy: Good morning. How are you?
Tony: I'm fine, thanks. How about you?
Amy: I'm also fine. Are you busy today?
Tony: I'm very busy today. I have five classes.
Amy: Five?! That's too many! Today I only have one.
Tony: One?! That's too few!

Vocabulary

	Simplified (traditional in Pinyin parentheses)	Part of speech	English [m.]
1.	一 (yī)	(num)	one
2.	二 (èr)	(num)	two
3.	三 (sān)	(num)	three
4.	四 (sì)	(num)	four
5.	五 (wǔ)	(num)	five
6.	六 (liù)	(num)	six
7.	七 (qī)	(num)	seven
8.	八 (bā)	(num)	eight
9.	九 (jiǔ)	(num)	nine
10.	十 (shí)	(num)	ten
11.	早 (zǎo)	(n)	morning; good morning
12.	安 (ān)	(adj)	peaceful
13.	早安 (zǎoān)	(phrase)	good morning
14.	很 (hěn)	(adv)	very
15.	谢谢 (謝謝) (xièxiè)	(v)	thanks
16.	天 (tiān)	(n)	day/sky
17.	今天 (jīntiān)	(n)	today
18.	忙 (máng)	(adj)	busy
19.	有 (yǒu)	(v)	to have, possess
20.	没 (méi)	(adv)	negates yǒu
21.	节 (節) (jié)	(m)	(measure word for sections of things)
22.	课 (課) (kè)	(n)	class [节]
23.	太 (tài)	(adv)	too, extremely
24.	了 (le)	(part)	(combines with 太 - see grammar)
25.	多 (duō)	(adj)	many

26. 少 shǎo (adj) few
27. 只 zhǐ (adv) only, merely

Grammar

Le [了] as **emphasizer**

The particle le [了] as used here serves to add emphasis to the verb or adjective of the sentence. It is often seen paired with tài [太] to express excessiveness.

Affirmative-negative questions

A sentence can be made into a question by having both affirmative and negative options together. To answer in the affirmative, the verb or adjective is repeated. (An affirmative adjective in this case is usually preceded by hěn [很] to avoid a comparative tone.) Responding in the negative is simply saying "not verb" or "not adjective".

S + V 不 V + O?

Example:

Q: 他是不是东尼?

Tā shì bu shì Dōngní?
Is he Tony?

Because the bù in affirmative-negative questions is often said quickly, marking the tone on bù is not strictly necessary in their case.

A: 是。 **or** 不是。

Shì. **or** Bú shì.
Yes (he is). or No (he isn't).

S + adj. 不 adj.?

Example:

Q: 今天艾美忙不忙?

Jīntiān Àiměi máng bù máng?
Is Amy busy today?

A: 她很忙。 **or** 她不忙。

Tā hěn máng. **or** Tā bù máng.
Yes, she's busy. or No, she's not busy.

Sentences using yǒu [有]

Yǒu [有] means *to have* and indicates possession.

S + 有 + O

Example:

我有三节课。

Wǒ yǒu sān jié kè.
I have three classes.

Yǒu is negated when preceded by méi [没].

S + 没 + 有 + O

Example:

今天她们没有一节课。

Jīntiān tāmen méi yǒu yì jié kè.
They don't have any class today.

Lesson 3: An introduction to particles

The Chinese language employs heavy usage of particles to modify the meaning of characters and sentences. Since Chinese has neither inflections nor tense, the mastery of particles is an absolute must if one is to fully comprehend both written and spoken Chinese. Below, you will find some of the most common particles in everyday Chinese.

The De [的] particle as possessive

The particle de [的] can be used to indicate possession. It is roughly equivalent to the contraction "X's" in English, where X is the subject.

1. 她的名字是金妮。

Tā de míngzi shì Jīnní.
Her name is Ginny.

The Le/Liǎo particle

Perfect Particle, Completive Particle The 了 particle is used mainly to indicate a **completed action** (in English, this is the *perfect aspect*).

Example: 他走了。 Tā zǒu le. *He has gone.*

The "le" here is used to modify 走 (zǒu, *to go*) into an action which has already been completed.

了 can also be used as an **imperative**, that is, a command which is issued by the subject

Example: 别再打扰我了! Bié zài dǎrǎo wǒ le! *Do not bother me again!*

In this instance, le is used in conjunction with bié ("do not") to form an imperative. *Note:* most imperatives are not formed using this construction.

Finally, 了, as in Liǎo (a homographic variant) can be used to indicate the subject's **capability** in doing such and such.

Example: 我实在吃不了了。 Wǒ shízài chī bù liǎo le. *I cannot possibly eat any more.*

At first glance, this sentence may seem a bit daunting as it includes two instances of the le particle, paired side-by-side. However, the first le is understood to be liǎo given its placement (bù + le is a nonsensical pairing). Therefore, liǎo serves to indicate the capability of eating any further and le *emphasizes* this assertion.

The Zhe/Zháo particle

The Zhe/Zháo particle is another particle that you'll frequently encounter in the course of your Chinese studies. Zhe, when added beside a character and thus forming a preposition, is used primarily to indicate an action which is **continuous**.

Example: 他睡着觉时有人敲门。 Tā shuìzhe jiào shí yǒurén qiāomén. *While he was sleeping, someone knocked on the door.*

In addition, Zháo is used to indicate **accomplishment**.

Example: 我終於把东西买着了! Wǒ zhōngyú bǎ dōngxī mǎi zháo le. *I've finally been able to buy this item!*

The bǎ (noun) (verb) zháo (le) construction is a particularly useful one and should be studied.

This Page Contains Content for Later Placement in Lessons

Comparisons Using bǐ [比]

Comparisons can be made using bǐ [比]. Adverbs (like 不, 也, 只, 都) and any auxiliary verbs are placed before bǐ in the sentence. The amount of the disparity between the two is placed after the adjective.

A 比 B + Adj.

1. 她比我忙。

Tā bǐ wǒ máng.
She is busier than I am.

2. 东尼也比我忙很多。

Dōngní yě bǐ wǒ máng hěn duō.
Tony is also a lot busier than I am.

Measure Words/量词 (liang4ci2)

In Chinese, most specified or numbered nouns must be preceded by [measure words](#) according to the type of object. It is like the English use of “pair” in the phrase “two pairs of pants”. Like the word “pair,” Chinese measure words are placed between the noun and the preceding number or [demonstrative pronoun](#).

1. 这本书里没有一个汉字。

Zhè běn shū lǐ méi yǒu yí gè Hànzì.
This book doesn't contain one Chinese character.

2. 那间宿舍有六十个学生。

Nà jiān sùshè yǒu liùshí ge xuésheng.
That dorm has sixty students.

Some Common Measure Words

For most items, "个" gè is used as a general measure word. 一个书包 yí gè shū bāo. Use "个" when you are unsure of the correct measure word to use.

For bigger animals like cows, we use "头". 一头牛 yì tóu niú. In this example, "一" is our number, "牛" was the item we were counting, and "头" was our measure word. Literally translated into English, "头" means head. So literally we are saying one head of cow. However, for horses, we use "匹". 一匹马 yì pǐ mǎ. One horse.

For medium-sized domestic animals like dogs or chickens, the measure word is "只" zhǐ. 一只狗 yì zhǐ gǒu. One dog. For fish and snakes, however, we use "条" tiáo. 一条鱼 yì tiáo yú. One fish.

For vehicles, the measure word is "辆" liàng. 一辆车 yí liàng chē. One car. For boats, however, "艘" sōu is used. 一艘船 yì sōu chuán. One boat.

For clothes and furniture, the measure word is "件" jiàn. 一件衣服 yí jiàn yī fù. One piece of clothing.

For flat things like paper or tables, we use "张" zhāng. 一张纸 yì zhāng zhǐ. One piece of paper.

For flowers and clouds, we use "朵" duǒ. 一朵花 yì duǒ huā. One flower.

For things with handles like knives, scissors and umbrellas we use "把" bǎ. 一把刀 yì bǎ dāo. One knife. The official measure word for scissors is "把", however, many Chinese use "个" when speaking. In written Chinese however, people usually revert to "把".

A more complete reference list of [Chinese measure words](#) can be found in the Wikipedia.

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