

Chinese Mandarin Pronunciation

Using Pinyin

CHECK THE APPEARANCE OF CHARACTERS		
Do these two characters have the same shape (o with an accent rising to the right)?		✓ YES - Start working
ó	ó	✗ NO – Click here to get fonts

© B. J. Burford and E. J. Burford 2007-2013

Updated 16 June 2013

See also the associated language document,
“Chinese Mandarin Introductory Course Using Pinyin”.

USE OF THIS FILE

This pronunciation course for Chinese Mandarin in Mandarin is provided in Word ".htm" format with hyperlinks to sound files. The Mandarin Pinyin characters are in one of Jaspell's TrueType "ttf" fonts.

You need do the following:

- Install the Pinyin font JPINNN01.ttf using Windows Start / (Settings /) Control Panel / Fonts / File / Install New Font.
- Open a webpage reader, such as "IEExplorer" or "Netscape", that handles ".htm" files with hyperlinks to ".wav" files.

The pronunciation course is similar to the early part of the introductory language course "pinyin introductory01.pdf". The "pdf" format only requires the use of Acrobat Reader, a tool available by free download.

STUDY 1
Pronunciation of individual and groups of characters

PRONUNCIATION 1.1 (Individual Sounds and Their Writing in Pinyin)

Pinyin script provides an approximate method for representing the pronunciation of Mandarin Chinese using Roman characters with accents. Some letters are pronounced as in English, but others have very different sounds (as highlighted in the following chart). Pronunciation also varies in different regions of China, but the following guidance is generally acceptable.

INDIVIDUAL SOUNDS

Letters	Pronunciation	Position
<u>a</u>	a as in “father”, “atone”	
<u>b</u>	b as in “bag”	
<u>c</u>	ts as in “bats”	
<u>ch</u>	tsh as in “hatshop”	
<u>d</u>	d as in “dog”	
<u>e</u>	e as in “her”	generally
<u>e</u>	e as in “yes”, “yeah”	after “y”
<u>f</u>	f as in “fun”	
<u>g</u>	g hard as in “get”	(not soft as in “gel”)
<u>h</u>	ch gutturally as in “loch”	
<u>i</u>	i as in “sir”, “circle”, “chirp”	after c, ch, r, s, sh, z, zh
<u>i</u>	ee as in “been”; i as in “bistro”	after b, d, j, l, m, n, p, q, t, x, y
<u>j</u>	j as in “jam”	
<u>k</u>	k as in “kitchen”	
<u>l</u>	l as in “love”	
<u>m</u>	m as in “mug”	
<u>n</u>	n as in “nibble”	
<u>o</u>	o as in “or”	
<u>p</u>	p as in “pun”	
<u>q</u>	chh as in “matchhead”	
<u>r</u>	r rolled as in “curl”	
<u>s</u>	s as in “sat”	
<u>sh</u>	sh as in “rashly”	
<u>t</u>	t as in “top”	
<u>u</u>	u as in “boot”	(See group below)
<u>w</u>	w as in “water”	
<u>wu</u>	oo as in “pool”	<u>not</u> “wu”
<u>x</u>	s as in “see”; hs as in “aah, see!”	
<u>y</u>	y as in “yam”	
<u>yi</u>	ee as in “been”	yi is “i”, <u>not</u> “yi”
<u>z</u>	ds as in “suds”	
<u>zh</u>	dge as in “hedgeless”	

See also the table below about groups of vowels and syllables.

PRACTICE 1.1 (Pronunciation of Characters in Simple Syllables)

Read: [ba](#), [ca](#), [cha](#), [da](#), [e](#), [ye](#), [er](#), [fa](#), [ga](#), [ha](#), [yi](#), [bi](#), [ci](#), [ju](#), [ka](#), [la](#), [ma](#),
[na](#), [bo](#), [pa](#), [qu](#), [re](#), [sa](#), [sha](#), [ta](#), [wu](#), [bu](#), [wa](#), [xi](#), [ya](#), [yi](#), [za](#), [zha](#)

[Repeat](#)

PRONUNCIATION 1.2 (Pronunciation of Special Vowel Groups)

See the following table titled: “Some Special Vowel Groups and Syllables”.

Some groups are marked with an asterisk, “*”. The following comments apply to these.

If the vowel group starting in “i” occurs on its own, it needs to be written beginning with “y” instead of “i”. So, “ian” would be written as “yan”.

Similarly, a group on its own starting in “u” is written using a “w” instead of the “u”. So, “uan” is written as “wan”.

Some sound groups are easier recognizable for an English speaker: [aisle](#); [ban](#); [bang](#); [naos](#) (sounding like now); [eight](#); [tjara](#); [ring](#).

SOME SPECIAL VOWEL GROUPS AND SYLLABLES	
Group	Sounds like...
<u>en</u>	<u>urn</u> or <u>undo</u>
<u>eng</u>	<u>bung</u>
<u>i</u> (in <u>ci</u> , <u>chi</u> , <u>ri</u> , <u>si</u> , <u>shi</u> , <u>zi</u> , <u>zhi</u>)	<u>shirt</u> (without r), <u>zircon</u> , <u>adze</u>
<u>i</u> (in <u>bi</u> , <u>di</u> , <u>fi</u> , <u>ji</u> , <u>li</u> , <u>mi</u> , <u>ni</u> , <u>qi</u> , <u>ti</u> , <u>xi</u> , <u>yi</u>)	<u>been</u> , <u>deed</u> , <u>jeep</u> , <u>tee</u> , <u>see</u> , <u>eel</u>
<u>ia / ya</u> *	<u>yarn</u> , try <u>a</u> bit
<u>ian / yan</u> *	<u>yen</u> , try <u>any</u>
<u>iang / yang</u> *	<u>young</u>
<u>iao / yao</u> *	<u>yowl</u>
<u>ie / ye</u> *	the <u>air</u> ; <u>ee-ye</u>
<u>iong / yong</u> *	<u>Jung</u> (German)
<u>iu / you</u> *	<u>yoyo</u>
<u>o</u>	<u>fore</u> , <u>door</u>
<u>ong</u> (after d, t, n, l, z, c, s, zh, ch, r, g, k, h)	<u>jung</u> (German); <u>long</u>
<u>ou</u>	<u>dough</u>
<u>u / wu</u> *	<u>shoe</u> , <u>gnu</u> , <u>do</u>
<u>u</u> (in <u>lü</u> , <u>nü</u>) / <u>yu</u> *	<u>chew</u> your food
<u>u</u> (in <u>ju</u> , <u>qu</u> , <u>xu</u>) / <u>yu</u> *	<u>chew</u> your food
<u>ua / wa</u> *	<u>wax</u>
<u>uai / wai</u> *	<u>wide</u>
<u>uan / wan</u> *	<u>won</u>
<u>uan</u> (after <u>j</u> , <u>q</u> , <u>x</u>) / <u>yuan</u> *	<u>ü-yen</u> ; <u>new end</u> ; <u>inuendo</u>
<u>uang / wang</u> *	<u>wangle</u>
<u>ue</u> (in <u>lüe</u> , <u>nüe</u>) / <u>yue</u> *	<u>ü-ye</u> , <u>new energy</u>
<u>ue</u> (in <u>jue</u> , <u>que</u> , <u>xue</u>) / <u>yue</u> *	<u>ü-ye</u> , <u>new energy</u>
<u>(uei) / ui / wei</u> *	<u>weigh</u>
<u>un</u> (after <u>d</u> , <u>t</u> , <u>n</u> , <u>l</u> , <u>z</u> , <u>c</u> , <u>s</u> , <u>zh</u> , <u>ch</u> , <u>sh</u> , <u>r</u> , <u>g</u> , <u>k</u> , <u>h</u>) / <u>wen</u>	<u>won</u> , <u>dun</u>
<u>(ueng) / weng</u> *	<u>swung</u>
<u>un</u> (in <u>jun</u> , <u>qun</u> , <u>xun</u>) / <u>yun</u> *	<u>unique</u> ; German <u>ü</u>
<u>uo / wo</u>	<u>wall</u>

PRACTICE 1.2 (Pronunciation of Special Vowel Groups and Syllables)

With the help of the table (of special vowel groups and syllables) given above please read these syllables:

Read:

en, ben, beng, ci, bi, ya, jia, lia, yan, dian, dianr, yang, liang, yao,
biao, jiao, ye, bie, jie, xie, yong, jiong, xiong, you, miu, jiu, o

Repeat

Read:

bo, dong, rong, zhong, wu, bu, yu, nü, lǚ, ju, qu, wa, zhua, hua,
wai, guai, wan, duan, juan, quan, xuan, wang, huang, chuang, yue

Repeat

Read:

lie, nie, jue, xue, wei, dui, zui, wen, dun, hun, yun, jun, xun, wo,
duo, shuo, huo, huor .

Repeat

PRONUNCIATION 1.3 (Pronunciation of “i” Depending on Its Context)

The vowel “i” may occur after some, but not all consonants. If the sound of the letter “i” occurs on its own, the sound is represented by “yi”.

The letter “i” can be pronounced in two different ways, depending on which sort of consonant it occurs with. It is easier to remember which is right, if you register where in your mouth the first group is pronounced.

Note: c, ch, r, s, sh, z, and zh are a family of sounds. They are all pronounced in the roof of the mouth towards the front of the palate with the help of different amounts of pressure from the tongue. With “r” the tongue barely touches the palate, whereas with “zh” the tongue is folded back there somewhat painfully.

WAYS TO PRONOUNCE “I”	
<u>ci</u> * what <u>si</u> r did	<u>bi</u> <u>be</u> en
<u>chi</u> * what <u>ch</u> urns around	<u>di</u> <u>de</u> ed
<u>ri</u> * never <u>ir</u> kesome	<u>ji</u> <u>je</u> ep
<u>si</u> * <u>s</u> ir	<u>li</u> <u>le</u> ek
<u>shi</u> * <u>sh</u> irt	<u>mi</u> <u>me</u> ek
<u>zi</u> * <u>z</u> ircon	<u>ni</u> <u>ne</u> ed
<u>zhi</u> * <u>zh</u> ourn	<u>pi</u> <u>pe</u> ek
	<u>qi</u> <u>che</u> ek
	<u>ti</u> <u>tee</u>
	<u>xi</u> “a <u>ah</u> , <u>see</u> !”
	<u>yi</u> “ <u>ee</u> l”
<u>Repeat</u>	<u>Repeat</u>

* If this “i” occurs with characters in the group in left hand column, but it occurs without a tonal mark — especially at the tail end of a word — it tends to be restrained. (Compare the end of English words like “sire”, “shire”, “adze”, “badge”, etc., in which the final vowel “e” is almost lost.) For example, this applies to “shi”, but not to sh, sh, sh, or sh.

PRACTICE 1.3 (Varying Pronunciation of “i”)

With the help of the table given above please read these syllables:

Read: bi, ci, chi, di, ji, li, mi, ni, pi, qi, ri, si, shi, ti, xi, yi, zi, zhi.

Repeat

PRONUNCIATION 1.4 (Vowel Tones and Their Tone Marks in Pinyin)

Mandarin is pronounced with tones. These are indicated in Pinyin script by tone marks.

Mandarin Tone	Pinyin Tone mark	Description of Tone	Example
First tone	-	highest and level pitch	mā (mother)
Second tone	´	starts high and rises	máfan (trouble)
Third tone	ˇ	falls first and then rises	mǎ (horse)
Fourth tone	`	starts high and then falls	mà (scold)
(Toneless)	(No mark)	unstressed or neutral	ma (eh, surely!) Repeat

NOTE 1

When a third tone (ˇ) precedes another third tone, pronounce it as a second tone (´). Hence “[hěn hǎo](#)” is pronounced ‘[hén hǎo](#)’. Similarly, “[nǐ hǎo](#)” is pronounced more like “[ní hǎo](#)”.

NOTE 2

Some words like “bù” change before a fourth tone syllable ` or before a toneless syllable. “bù” changes to “bú”.

PRACTICE 1.4 (Pronunciation of Vowel Tones)

Read the following verses (from Galatians 5:22-23).

Lìng yì fāngmiàn,	shènglíng de guǒshí	yǒu	àixīn,	xǐlè,	héping,
<i>On the other hand,</i>	<i>the fruitage of the spirit</i>	<i>is / have</i>	<i>love,</i>	<i>joy,</i>	<i>peace,</i>

jiānrěn,	réní,	liángshàn,	xìnxīn,	wēnhé,	zìzhì.
<i>long-suffering,</i>	<i>kindness,</i>	<i>goodness,</i>	<i>faith,</i>	<i>mildness,</i>	<i>self-control.</i>

Lìng yì fāngmiàn, shènglíng de guǒshí yǒu àixīn, xǐlè, héping, jiānrěn, réní, liángshàn, xìnxīn, wēnhé, zìzhì.

PRACTICE 1.5 (Pronunciation of Vowel Tones)

Read:

<u>Qǐng dú zhège hǎo xiāoxi.</u>	Please read this good news.
<u>Wǒ xīwàng gěi nǐ zhège tèbié qīngtiē.</u>	I'd like to give you this special invitation.
<u>Xīwàng hěn kuài jiàndào nǐ!</u>	See you soon! (Like very quickly get to see you.)
<u>Zhù nǐ zǎo rì kāngfù!</u>	'Get well soon!'

DIALOGUE 1.1 (Pronunciation of Vowel Tones)

Read this dialogue as two persons, A and B:

<u>A</u>	Zǎoshàng hǎo	Good morning
<u>B</u>	Zǎoshàng hǎo.	Good morning
<u>A</u>	Hěn gāoxìng jiàndào nǐ	Nice to see you.
<u>B</u>	Wǒ yě hěn gāoxìng jiàndào nǐ.	Nice to see you too.
<u>A</u>	Wǒ jiào X. Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?	I'm called X. What name are you called?
<u>B</u>	Wǒ jiào X.	I'm called X.
<u>A</u>	Wǒmen xīwàng xiǎngyǒu héping de shēngmìng, kěshì yǒu duō kùnnan.	We'd like to enjoy a life of peace, but we have much difficulty.
<u>B</u>	Duì!	Correct!
<u>A</u>	Wǒ xīwàng gěi nǐ zhèfèn qǐngtiē.	I'd like to give you this invitation.
<u>B</u>	Wèishénme?	For what?
<u>A</u>	Měi Xīngqīyī yǒu pǔtónghuà yòng de tāolùn.	Each Monday there's a discussion using Mandarin.
<u>B</u>	Tāolùn de huàtí shì shénme?	What is the topic?
<u>A</u>	Wǒmen xuéxí Shàngdì de yùyán. Tā shuō le Tā huì zěnyàng bāngzhù yìrén.	We study God's prophecy. He said how He will help righteous ones.
<u>B</u>	Zài nǎr?	Where?
<u>A</u>	Wǒ néng lái ràng nǐ dāchē.	I can come and give you a lift by car.
<u>B</u>	Xièxie. Kěshì wǒ néng zǒulù.	Thanks. However, I can go on foot.

DIALOGUE 1.2 (Pronunciation of Vowel Tones)

Read this dialogue as two persons, A and B:

<u>A</u>	Nǐ xiǎng dú zhège hǎo xiāoxi ma?	Would you like to read this good news?
<u>B</u>	Hǎode	OK
<u>A</u>	Nǐ duì zhège huàtí gǎn xìngqù ma?	Are you interested in this topic?
<u>B</u>	Wǒ yǒu xìngqù liǎojiě. Kěshì guò yíhuǐr.	I'm interested in understanding. But later.
<u>A</u>	Zhè shì wǒde diànhuà hàomǎ. Zhè shì wǒde yīmèir dìzhǐ.	This is my telephone number. This is my email address.
<u>B</u>	Xièxie.	Thanks.
<u>A</u>	Nǐ néng gàosù wǒ nǐde diànhuà hàomǎ hé dìzhǐ ma?	Could you tell me your telephone number and address?
<u>B</u>	Hǎode. Gěi nǐ.	OK. Here you are.
<u>A</u>	Míngtiān Yíngwén yòng de tāolùn huì shì: “Shàngdì duì nǐ hěn zhòngshì ma?”	Tomorrow the topic in English will be: “Does God count you as important?”

STUDY 2
Greetings and appreciation; read

VOCABULARY 2.1 (Greetings, Request and Thanks)

<u>Huānyíng!</u> *	Welcome!
<u>Nǐ hǎo!</u>	Hello! Hi! Howdy! How do you do!
<u>pǔtōnghuà</u>	Mandarin
<u>Qǐng</u>	Please!
<u>dú</u>	[to] read
<u>Xièxie!</u>	Thanks!
<u>Xièxie nín!</u>	Thank you! (<i>polite form</i>)

* See guidance on Mandarin pronunciation and Pinyin script.

Check especially “h” in Pronunciation 1.1.

Check especially “q”, and “x” in Pronunciation 1.1.

Check tones and tonal marks in Pronunciation 1.4.

Remember, when a third tone (ˇ) precedes another third tone, pronounce it as a second tone (ˊ). So, “nǐ hǎo” is pronounced more like “ní hǎo”.

PRACTICE 2.1 (Greetings and Appreciation)

<u>Nǐ hǎo!</u>	Hi!
<u>qǐng</u>	please
<u>Qǐng dú</u>	Please read.
<u>Xièxie</u>	Thanks!
<u>pǔtōnghuà</u>	Mandarin
<u>Huānyíng</u>	Welcome!

STUDY 3

Presenting a message; style awareness

VOCABULARY 3.1 (Messages)

zhè; zhèi	this (some person or thing here)
<u>zhège</u> ...	this (particular) ...
nà ...	that (some person or thing there)
<u>nàge</u> ...	that (particular) ...
<u>hǎo</u>	well, good fine
<u>xiāoxi</u>	news
<u>xìnxī</u>	information, message
<u>qǐngtiē</u>	invitation

(Remember, “h” in “hǎo” is pronounced raspingly, like “ch” in Scottish “loch”)

(Pronounce “zh” in “zhè” like ‘dge’ in ‘hedgeless’. Curl back the tongue.)

GRAMMAR 3.1 (Style Awareness)

You may be able to discern subtle differences in how a word feels according to context. Observe in the following example that “zhè” would feel too vague and general, so it’s good to add “-ge” to make the object in the sentence more specific.

The examples provided at the start of this course try to make meaningful sentences, but with only a few words learned at this stage, it is almost unavoidable that some of them lack some of the finer style you can achieve with a wider choice of words.

Qǐng dú zhè[ge].	Please read this [item].
------------------	--------------------------

INCREMENTAL CONSTRUCTION 3.1 (Messages)

Learn the following method of constructing a sentence incrementally.

Nǐ hǎo!	Hi!
Qǐng dú	Please read.
xiāoxi	news
hǎo xiāoxi	good news
zhège xiāoxi	this news
zhège hǎo xiāoxi	this good news
dú zhège hǎo xiāoxi	Read this good news
Qǐng dú zhège hǎo xiāoxi!	Please read this good news!

INCREMENTAL CONSTRUCTION 3.2 (Messages)

Nǐ hǎo!	Hi!
Qǐng dú	Please read.
qǐngtiě	invitation
hǎo qǐngtiě	good invitation
zhège qǐngtiě	this invitation
zhège hǎo qǐngtiě	this nice invitation
dú zhège hǎo qǐngtiě	read this nice invitation
Qǐng dú zhège hǎo qǐngtiě!	Please read this nice invitation!
Xièxie!	Thanks!
Xièxie nín!	Thank you! (<i>polite form</i>)

REVIEW 3.1

Greetings! / ‘Hello!’ / ‘How are you?’	‘ <u>nǐ hǎo</u> ’! [- h is pronounced like ch in loch]
Please!	<u>qǐng</u> ! [- q is pronounced like ch in chicken]
Read!	<u>dú</u> !
Please read ...!	<u>qǐng dú</u> ...!
information	<u>xìnxī</u>
this [a word used in place of a person or thing]	<u>zhè</u> [- zh is pronounced like dge in fudge]
this particular ...	<u>zhège</u> ... - g is like g in get
this information	<u>zhège xìnxī</u>
Please read this invitation.	<u>Qǐng dú zhège xìnxī.</u>
Please read this invitation.	<u>Qǐng dú zhège qǐngtiě.</u>
Thanks!	<u>xièxie</u> !
Thank you! (<i>polite form</i>)	<u>xièxie nín</u> !