

The Football Coach's Mandarin Chinese Phrasebook

500+ Essential Phrases for Coaching in China

Free guide for English-speaking coaches working in China, Taiwan, Singapore, or with Mandarin-speaking players. Uses Simplified Chinese characters with Pinyin pronunciation (tone marks included).

What's Inside

Training session commands

Tactical instructions

Match day communication

Player feedback phrases

Goalkeeper-specific language

Staff & parent communication

Common mistakes to avoid

Quick reference cards

Understanding Pinyin Tones: Mandarin has 4 tones plus a neutral tone. Getting tones right is essential for being understood. In this guide: 1st tone (high flat) = ā, 2nd tone (rising) = á, 3rd tone (dip) = ǎ, 4th tone (falling) = à. Practice with native speakers for best results.



Training Session Commands

Starting & Stopping

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Go! / Start!	开始!	kāi shǐ
Stop!	停!	tíng
Freeze!	不要动!	bú yào dòng
Again!	再来一次!	zài lái yí cì
One more time	再做一遍	zài zuò yí biàn
Reset!	重新开始!	chóng xīn kāi shǐ
Take a break	休息一下	xiū xi yí xià
Water break	喝水休息	hē shuǐ xiū xi
Gather round	过来集合	guò lái jí hé
Listen up	听好了	tīng hǎo le
Pay attention	注意听	zhù yì tīng
That's enough	够了	gòu le
Finished / Done	结束了	jié shù le
Well done, let's continue	好的, 继续	hǎo de, jì xù

Tempo & Intensity

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Faster!	快一点!	kuài yí diǎn
Slower!	慢一点!	mǎn yí diǎn
Speed up!	加速!	jiā sù
Game speed!	比赛速度!	bǐ sài sù dù
High intensity!	高强度!	gāo qiáng dù
Keep the tempo	保持节奏	bǎo chí jié zòu
Push yourselves	努力! 加油!	nǚ lì! jiā yóu!
Don't walk	不要走, 要跑	bù yào zǒu, yào pǎo
Sprint!	冲刺!	chōng cì
Full effort	全力以赴	quán lì yǐ fù
Maximum effort	最大努力	zuì dà nǚ lì
More energy!	更有活力!	gèng yǒu huó lì
Stay focused	集中注意力	jī zhōng zhù yì lì

Movement Commands

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Move!	动起来!	dòng qǐ lái
Stay there	站在那里	zhàn zài nà lǐ
Come here	过来	guò lái
Go there	去那边	qù nà biān
Swap positions	换位置	huàn wèi zhì
Rotate!	轮换!	lún huàn

Join the other group	加入另一组	jiā rù lìng yì zǔ
You're in	你上场	nǐ shàng chǎng
You're out	你下场	nǐ xià chǎng
Next group	下一组	xià yì zǔ
Form a line	排成一排	pái chéng yì pái
Make a circle	围成一个圈	wéi chéng yí gè quān
Spread out	散开	sàn kāi
Get closer	靠近一点	kào jìn yì diǎn

Technical Corrections

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Use your left foot	用左脚	yòng zuǒ jiǎo
Use your right foot	用右脚	yòng yòu jiǎo
Both feet	双脚	shuāng jiǎo
Inside of the foot	脚内侧	jiǎo nèi cè
Outside of the foot	脚外侧	jiǎo wài cè
Head up!	抬头!	tái tóu
Look up	向上看	xiàng shàng kàn
First touch	第一脚触球	dì yī jiǎo chù qiú
Soft touch	轻触	qīng chù
Body position	身体姿势	shēn tǐ zī shì
Open your body	身体打开	shēn tǐ dǎ kāi
Check your shoulder	看一下身后	kàn yí xià shēn hòu
Bend your knees	弯曲膝盖	wān qū xī gài
Stay on your toes	踮起脚尖	diǎn qǐ jiǎo jiǎn
Weight forward	重心向前	zhòng xīn xiàng qián

Ball Work

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Pass!	传球!	chuán qiú
Short pass	短传	duǎn chuán
Long pass	长传	cháng chuán
Through ball	直塞球	zhí sāi qiú
Dribble	带球	dài qiú
Control the ball	控球	kòng qiú
Trap the ball	停球	tíng qiú
Volley	凌空	líng kōng
Header	头球	tóu qiú
Chest it down	用胸部停球	yòng xiōng bù tíng qiú
Shield the ball	护球	hù qiú
Keep possession	保持控球	bǎo chí kòng qiú

Tactical Instructions

Formations & Positions

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Formation	阵型	zhèn xíng
We play 4-3-3	我们踢四三三	wǒ men tī sì sān sān
Goalkeeper	守门员	shǒu mén yuán
Defender	后卫	hòu wèi
Centre-back	中后卫	zhōng hòu wèi
Full-back	边后卫	biān hòu wèi
Right-back	右后卫	yòu hòu wèi
Left-back	左后卫	zuǒ hòu wèi
Midfielder	中场	zhōng chǎng
Defensive midfielder	防守型中场	fáng shǒu xíng zhōng chǎng
Central midfielder	中前卫	zhōng qián wèi
Attacking midfielder	进攻型中场	jìn gōng xíng zhōng chǎng
Winger	边锋	biān fēng
Forward / Striker	前锋	qián fēng
Centre-forward	中锋	zhōng fēng
Wing-back	翼卫	yì wèi

Attacking Principles

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Attack!	进攻!	jìn gōng
Width!	拉开宽度!	lā kāi kuān dù
Stretch them	拉开他们	lā kāi tā men
Find the space	找空间	zhǎo kōng jiān
Make space	创造空间	chuàng zào kōng jiān
Between the lines	两条线之间	liǎng tiáo xiàn zhī jiān
Third man run	第三人跑位	dì sān rén pǎo wèi
Overlap	套边	tào biān
Underlap	内切跑位	nèi qiē pǎo wèi
Switch the play	转移	zhuǎn yí
Play forward	向前踢	xiàng qián tī
Turn!	转身!	zhuǎn shēn
Shoot!	射门!	shè mén
Cross it!	传中!	chuán zhōng
One-two	二过一	èr guò yī
Give and go	传球跑位	chuán qiú pǎo wèi
Support the ball	接应	jiē yīng
Make the run	跑位	pǎo wèi
Get into the box	冲入禁区	chōng rù jìn qū
Far post	远门柱	yuǎn mén zhù

Near post	近门柱	jìn mén zhù
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Defensive Principles

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Defend!	防守!	fáng shǒu
Press!	逼抢!	bī qiǎng
High press	高位逼抢	gāo wèi bī qiǎng
Drop!	回防!	huí fáng
Hold the line	保持阵型	bǎo chí zhèn xíng
Squeeze!	压缩空间!	yā suō kōng jiān
Compact!	紧凑!	jīn còu
Cover!	补位!	bǔ wèi
Mark him!	盯住他!	dīng zhù tā
Man on!	有人!	yǒu rén
Behind you!	身后!	shēn hòu
Clear it!	解围!	jiě wéi
Win the ball	抢球	qiǎng qiú
Block the shot	封堵射门	fēng dǔ shè mén
No foul!	不要犯规!	bú yào fàn guī
Stay goalside	站在球门这边	zhàn zài qiú mén zhè biān
Delay!	延缓!	yán huǎn
Tackle!	铲球!	chǎn qiú
Intercept	拦截	lán jié

Transitions

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Transition!	转换!	zhuǎn huàn
Counter-attack!	反击!	fǎn jī
Fast break!	快速反击!	kuài sù fǎn jī
Get back!	回去!	huí qù
Everyone back!	所有人回防!	suǒ yǒu rén huí fáng
Recovery run	回追	huí zhuī
Quick!	快!	kuài
Go forward together	一起向前	yì qǐ xiàng qián

Set Pieces

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Free kick	任意球	rèn yì qiú
Corner kick	角球	jiǎo qiú
Penalty kick	点球	diǎn qiú
Throw-in	界外球	jiè wài qiú
Goal kick	球门球	qiú mén qiú
Set up the wall	排人墙	pái rén qiáng
Attack the ball	去抢球	qù qiǎng qiú

Near post run	跑近门柱	pǎo jìn mén zhù
Far post run	跑远门柱	pǎo yuǎn mén zhù
Short corner	短角球	duǎn jiǎo qiú



Match Day Communication

Pre-Match

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Team meeting	球队会议	qiú duì huì yì
Here's the starting lineup	这是首发阵容	zhè shì shǒu fā zhèn róng
You're starting	你是首发	nǐ shì shǒu fā
You're on the bench	你先替补	nǐ xiān tǐ bǔ
Warm up properly	好好热身	hǎo hǎo rè shēn
This is the game plan	这是我们的战术	zhè shì wǒ men de zhàn shù
Focus!	专注!	zhuān zhù
Are you ready?	你们准备好了吗?	nǐ men zhǔn bèi hǎo le ma
Let's go!	走吧!	zǒu ba
Believe in yourselves	相信自己	xiāng xìn zì jǐ

During the Match

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Good!	好!	hǎo
That's it!	就是这样!	jiù shì zhè yàng
Keep going!	继续!	jì xù
Come on!	加油!	jiā yóu
Time!	有时间!	yǒu shí jiān
No time!	快点!	kuài diǎn
Stay calm	冷静	lěng jìng
Relax	放松	fàng sōng
Don't rush	不要急	bú yào jí
Patient!	耐心!	nài xīn
Wake up!	醒醒!	xǐng xǐng
Concentrate!	专心!	zhuān xīn
Talk to each other!	互相交流!	hù xiāng jiāo liú
Communicate!	沟通!	gōu tōng
Don't argue with the referee	不要和裁判争吵	bú yào hé cái pàn zhēng chǎo

Substitutions

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Substitution!	换人!	huàn rén
Get ready to come on	准备上场	zhǔn bèi shàng chǎng
Warm up	去热身	qù rè shēn
You're coming off	你要被换下	nǐ yào bèi huàn xià
Good game	打得好	dǎ de hǎo
Well played	踢得好	tī de hǎo
Here's what I need from you	这是我对你的要求	zhè shì wǒ duì nǐ de yāo qiú
Play your position	踢好你的位置	tī hǎo nǐ de wèi zhi

Half-Time & Post-Match

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Half-time	中场休息	zhōng chǎng xiū xi
Second half	下半场	xià bàn chǎng
Well done first half	上半场踢得好	shàng bàn chǎng tī de hǎo
We need to improve	我们需要进步	wǒ men xū yào jìn bù
Keep doing what you're doing	继续保持	jì xù bǎo chí
Change of plan	改变战术	gǎi biàn zhàn shù
Full time	比赛结束	bǐ sài jié shù
We won!	我们赢了!	wǒ men yíng le
We lost	我们输了	wǒ men shū le
It was a draw	平局	píng jú
Proud of you all	为你们骄傲	wèi nǐ men jiāo ào
We'll do better next time	下次会更好	xià cì huì gèng hǎo

Cultural Note - Face (面子 miàn zi): "Saving face" is extremely important in Chinese culture. Avoid criticizing players publicly or embarrassing them in front of teammates. Private, constructive feedback is far more effective. Praise publicly, correct privately.



Player Feedback Phrases

Positive Reinforcement

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Excellent!	太棒了!	tài bàng le
Well done!	干得好!	gàn de hǎo
Perfect!	完美!	wán měi
Great job!	做得好!	zuò de hǎo
Beautiful!	漂亮!	piào liang
That's the way!	就是这样!	jiù shì zhè yàng
Keep it up!	继续保持!	jì xù bǎo chí
Much better!	好多了!	hǎo duō le
Good improvement	有进步	yǒu jìn bù
I can see your effort	我看到你的努力	wǒ kàn dào nǐ de nǔ lì
Great attitude	态度很好	tài dù hěn hǎo
Good decision	好的选择	hǎo de xuǎn zé
Smart play	聪明的踢法	cōng míng de tī fǎ

Constructive Corrections

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Try again	再试一次	zài shì yí cì
Not quite	还不够	hái bú gòu
Almost!	差一点!	chā yí diǎn
This way instead	这样做	zhè yàng zuò
Watch me	看我	kàn wǒ
Like this	像这样	xiàng zhè yàng
Think about it	想一想	xiǎng yí xiǎng
What could you do better?	你可以做得更好吗?	nǐ kě yǐ zuò de gèng hǎo ma
Next time, try...	下次试试...	xià cì shì shì...
Focus on this	专注于这个	zhuān zhù yú zhè ge
You can do better	你可以做得更好	nǐ kě yǐ zuò de gèng hǎo
Keep working on it	继续练习	jì xù liàn xí

Encouragement

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Don't give up	不要放弃	bú yào fàng qì
You can do it	你可以的	nǐ kě yǐ de
I believe in you	我相信你	wǒ xiāng xìn nǐ
Stay positive	保持积极	bǎo chí jī jí
Head up	抬起头来	tái qǐ tóu lái
Next time	下次	xià cì
It's okay, keep going	没关系, 继续	méi guān xi, jì xù
Everyone makes mistakes	每个人都会犯错	měi gè rén dōu huì fàn cuò

Learn from this	从中学习	cóng zhōng xué xí
Be brave	勇敢一点	yǒng gǎn yì diǎn
Trust yourself	相信自己	xiāng xìn zì jǐ



Goalkeeper-Specific Language

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Goalkeeper	守门员	shǒu mén yuán
Goalie (informal)	门将	mén jiāng
Keeper!	门将的!	mén jiāng de
Your ball!	你的球!	nǐ de qiú
Away!	出击!	chū jī
Stay!	站住!	zhàn zhù
Come out!	出来!	chū lái
Stay on your line	站好门线	zhàn hǎo mén xiàn
Organize your wall	指挥人墙	zhǐ huī rén qiáng
Talk to your defense	和后卫沟通	hé hòu wèi gōu tōng
Command the box	控制禁区	kòng zhì jìn qū
Catch it!	接住!	jiē zhù
Punch it!	打出去!	dǎ chū qù
Hold it!	抱住!	bào zhù
Get down!	扑下去!	pū xià qù
Make yourself big	身体放大	shēn tǐ fàng dà
Ready position	准备姿势	zhǔn bèi zī shì
Diving save	鱼跃扑救	yú yuè pū jiù
Footwork	脚步移动	jiǎo bù yí dòng
Distribution	发球	fā qiú
Throw it	手抛球	shǒu pāo qiú
Kick it long	长传	cháng chuán
Roll it out	滚地球	gǔn dì qiú

Staff & Parent Communication

Team Staff

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Head coach	主教练	zhǔ jiào liàn
Assistant coach	助理教练	zhù lǐ jiào liàn
Goalkeeper coach	守门员教练	shǒu mén yuán jiào liàn
Fitness coach	体能教练	tǐ néng jiào liàn
Physio / Physical therapist	理疗师	lǐ liáo shī
Team manager	球队经理	qiú duì jīng lǐ
Team doctor	队医	duì yī
Kit manager	装备管理员	zhuāng bèi guǎn lǐ yuán
Referee	裁判	cái pàn
Linesman	边裁	biān cái

Parent Communication

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Hello parents	家长们好	jiā zhǎng men hǎo
Your child is doing well	您的孩子表现很好	nín de hái zǐ biǎo xiàn hěn hǎo
They're improving	他/她在进步	tā zài jìn bù
Training is at...	训练时间是...	xùn liàn shí jiān shì...
The game is at...	比赛时间是...	bǐ sài shí jiān shì...
Please arrive early	请提前到达	qǐng tí qián dào dá
Bring water and snacks	请带水和零食	qǐng dài shuǐ hé líng shí
The match is cancelled	比赛取消了	bǐ sài qǔ xiāo le
Training is cancelled	训练取消了	xùn liàn qǔ xiāo le
Do you have any questions?	您有问题吗？	nín yǒu wèn tí ma
Thank you for your support	谢谢您的支持	xiè xiè nín de zhī chí

Injury & Medical

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Are you okay?	你还好吗？	nǐ hái hǎo ma
Where does it hurt?	哪里疼？	nǎ lǐ téng
Can you walk?	你能走吗？	nǐ néng zǒu ma
Can you continue?	你能继续吗？	nǐ néng jì xù ma
Take a rest	休息一下	xiū xi yí xià
Get some ice	拿点冰	ná diǎn bīng
Stretch it out	拉伸一下	lā shēn yí xià
You need to see the doctor	你需要看医生	nǐ xū yào kàn yī shēng
It's just a knock	只是碰了一下	zhǐ shì pèng le yí xià
Take your time	慢慢来	màn màn lái

Cultural Note - Respect for Elders: In Chinese culture, age and hierarchy matter greatly. Always address parents and senior staff formally. Use 您 (nín, formal "you") instead of 你 (nǐ, informal) with parents and elders. Players should



Common Mistakes to Avoid

Tone Matters! Getting tones wrong can completely change meaning. Here are critical examples where wrong tones cause confusion or embarrassment:

Dangerous Tone Errors

What You Mean	Correct	Common Mistake	What It Means
To ask / question	问 (wèn)	吻 (wěn)	To kiss
To buy	买 (mǎi)	卖 (mài)	To sell
Horse	马 (mǎ)	妈 (mā) / 骂 (mà)	Mother / To scold
Four	四 (sì)	死 (sǐ)	Death (avoid saying "4" casually)
Sleep	睡觉 (shuì jiào)	水饺 (shuǐ jiǎo)	Dumplings
To practice	练习 (liàn xí)	恋习 (liàn xí)	Love habit (wrong character)

False Friends & Confusions

English Term	Don't Say	Do Say	Why
Football/Soccer	英式足球	足球 (zú qiú)	Just "football" - no need to specify
Coach (person)	长途汽车	教练 (jiào liàn)	长途汽车 is a bus/coach (vehicle)
Kit/Uniform	工具	球衣 (qiú yī)	工具 means tools
Pitch (field)	音调	球场 (qiú chǎng)	音调 is musical pitch
Boot (shoe)	靴子	足球鞋 (zú qiú xié)	靴子 is a regular boot

Cultural Mistakes

Mistake	Why It's Wrong	Better Approach
Publicly criticizing a player	Causes severe loss of face	Give feedback privately, praise publicly
Singling out mistakes	Humiliating in group culture	Address the team generally, speak to individual later
Refusing gifts from parents	Can be seen as rejection	Accept graciously, thank them sincerely
Using first names with adults	Seen as disrespectful	Use titles: 王教练 (Coach Wang), 李女士 (Ms. Li)
Being too direct with criticism	Causes embarrassment	Soften with "maybe try..." or "what if..."
Pointing with one finger	Considered rude	Use an open hand to gesture
Using the number 4 casually	四 (4) sounds like 死 (death)	Be aware in jersey numbers, avoid emphasis

Lucky & Unlucky Numbers: The number 8 (八, bā) is very lucky as it sounds like 发 (fā, prosperity). The number 4 (四, sì) is unlucky as it sounds like 死 (sǐ, death). The number 9 (九, jiǔ) is lucky as it sounds like 久 (jiǔ, long-lasting). Some players may prefer jersey numbers accordingly.

Quick Reference Cards

10 Essential Commands

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Go!	开始!	kāi shǐ
Stop!	停!	tíng
Again!	再来!	zài lái
Good!	好!	hǎo
Pass!	传球!	chuán qiú
Shoot!	射门!	shè mén
Press!	逼抢!	bī qiǎng
Cover!	补位!	bǔ wèi
Move!	动起来!	dòng qǐ lái
Listen!	听好了!	tīng hǎo le

Numbers (For Formations & Drills)

Number	Chinese	Pinyin
1	一	yī
2	二	èr
3	三	sān
4	四	sì
5	五	wǔ
6	六	liù
7	七	qī
8	八	bā
9	九	jiǔ
10	十	shí
11	十一	shí yī

Essential Greetings

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Hello	你好	nǐ hǎo
Hello (formal)	您好	nín hǎo
Good morning	早上好	zǎo shang hǎo
Good afternoon	下午好	xià wǔ hǎo
Good evening	晚上好	wǎn shang hǎo
Goodbye	再见	zài jiàn
See you tomorrow	明天见	míng tiān jiàn
Thank you	谢谢	xiè xie

You're welcome	不客气	bú kè qì
Sorry	对不起	duì bu qǐ

Emergency Phrases

English	Chinese	Pinyin
Help!	救命!	jiù mìng
Call a doctor!	叫医生!	jiào yī shēng
Call an ambulance!	叫救护车!	jiào jiù hù chē
Don't move him/her	不要动他/她	bú yào dòng tā
Stay calm	保持冷静	bǎo chí lěng jìng
Everyone stay back	大家退后	dà jiā tuì hòu

Key Cultural Tips for Coaching in China:

- **Hierarchy matters** - Show respect to senior staff and parents, expect respect from players
- **Group harmony** - Avoid singling out individuals negatively in front of others
- **Patience with language** - Learning Mandarin takes time; your effort will be appreciated
- **Relationship building (关系 guānxi)** - Building trust takes time, invest in relationships
- **Food culture** - Team meals and shared food build bonds; accept invitations graciously
- **Gift giving** - Small gifts are common; red envelopes (红包) for special occasions
- **Punctuality** - Being on time shows respect; early is better
- **Business cards** - Present and receive with both hands, study briefly before putting away

The Football Coach's Mandarin Chinese Phrasebook

By Kevin Middleton / Football Coaching Academy

Part of the 360TFT ecosystem