

# The Six Tones in Vietnamese

Vietnamese is a tonal language, meaning the pitch and contour of your voice when you pronounce a syllable can completely change the meaning of the word. There are six distinct tones in standard Vietnamese, and each tone is shown in writing by a specific tone mark (except for the first, which is unmarked). Here's an overview:

## 1. Thanh Ngang (Mid-Level/Flat Tone)

- Mark: No mark
- Sound: Steady, flat pitch.
- Example: nam  
    • (year), ban  
    • (friend)

## 2. Thanh Huyền (Low Falling Tone)

- Mark: ` (grave accent)
- Sound: Pitch falls gently.
- Example: nằm (to lie down), bàn (table)

## 3. Thanh Sắc (High Rising Tone)

- Mark: \` (acute accent)
- Sound: Pitch rises sharply.
- Example: nắm (to hold), bán (to sell)

## 4. Thanh Hỏi (Falling-Rising/Question Tone)

- Mark: ᷑ (hook above)
- Sound: Dips then rises.
- Example: biển (ocean)

## 5. Thanh Ngã (Broken Rising/Tilde Tone)

- Mark: ~ (tilde)
- Sound: Rises with a vocal break.
- Example: ngã (fall)

## 6. Thanh Nặng (Heavy/Glottalized Tone)

- Mark: \· (dot below)

- Sound: Drops sharply, ends abruptly.
- Example: nặng (heavy), bạn (you, friend, informal)

Each word in these examples can have a completely different meaning depending on its tone, showing the importance of mastering Vietnamese tonal pronunciation.