

Introduction



I. Chinese Language and Dialects

China is roughly the same size as the United States. There are numerous regional dialects of Chinese. These dialects, which are often mutually unintelligible, are usually divided into eight groups: Northern, Wu, Kejia (Hakka), Southern Min (Xiamen), Northern Min (Fuzhou), Yue (Cantonese), Xiang or Hunan, and Gan or Jiangxi.

Modern Standard Chinese is known as *Putonghua* (“common language”) in mainland China; *Guoyu* (“national language”), but also *Huayu* (“language spoken by ethnic Chinese people”), in Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking communities such as Singapore and Malaysia. It is the *lingua franca* for intra-ethnic (among different Chinese dialect speakers) as well as inter-ethnic (among ethnic Chinese and other minority groups) communication in China. Its grammar is codified from the modern Chinese literary canon, while its pronunciation is based on the speech of Beijing.

China officially recognizes 56 ethnic groups. The largest group is the Han, which makes up over 90% of China’s population. Many of the other 55 ethnic minorities speak their own distinct languages.

II. Syllabic Structure and Pronunciation of Modern Standard Chinese

A syllable of Modern Standard Chinese is usually composed of three parts: an initial consonant, a final consisting of vowels or vowel-like sounds and ending consonants -[n] or -[ng], and a tone. The tone is superimposed on the entire syllable. A syllable may also have no initial consonant.

Chinese syllabic structure:

syllable	tone	
	(initial)	final

In this book, Chinese sounds are represented by *Hanyu Pinyin*—shortened to *Pinyin*. The *Pinyin* system uses twenty-five of the twenty-six letters of the Roman alphabet. Although *Pinyin* symbols are thus the same as English letters, the actual sounds they represent can be very different from their English counterparts. Over time, you will acquire a better appreciation of the finer details of Chinese pronunciation. This chapter is designed to help you become aware of these distinctions, though attaining more native-sounding pronunciation will take time and effort through extensive listening and practice.

A. Simple Finals:

There are six simple finals in Modern Standard Chinese:

a, o, e, i, u, ü

When it is pronounced by itself, a is a central vowel. The tongue remains in a natural, relaxed position. It sounds similar to a as in “fa la la” in English.

o is a rounded semi-high back vowel. The lips are rounded when pronouncing o. o seldom appears as a syllable by itself. Usually it compounds with the initials b, p, m, and f, and should be practiced with them. Because of the bilabial or labio-dental nature of b p m f, o sounds almost like a diphthong or double vowel uo. It glides from a brief u to o.

e is an unrounded semi-high back vowel. It may be helpful to first position the tongue as if to pronounce o, and then change the shape of the mouth from rounded to unrounded. At the same time spread the lips apart, as if you were smiling. This vowel is different from “e” in English, which is pronounced with the tongue raised slightly forward.

i is an unrounded high front vowel. Try to squeeze a smile and pull the corners of your mouth straight back. It is similar to the long vowel in the English word “sheep.” However, the tongue is raised higher than it would be to pronounce its counterpart in English.

u is a rounded high back vowel. Pucker up your lips when pronouncing this sound. It is similar to the long vowel in the English word “coop,” but the tongue is raised higher and retracted more.

ü is a rounded high front vowel. To produce this vowel, first position the tongue as if to pronounce i, then round the lips.

In the *Pinyin* system, besides the high front vowel, i also represents two additional special vowels. One is a front apical vowel, the other a back apical vowel—that is to say, they are articulated with the front and back part of the tongue respectively. Both of these vowels are homorganic with the very limited sets of initials with which they can co-occur (see below z, c, s and zh, ch, sh, and r). In other words, they are pronounced in the same area of the vocal tract as those consonants. You’ll learn how to pronounce it simply by prolonging the sounds of the two groups of consonants.



B. Initials

There are twenty-one initial consonants in Modern Standard Chinese:

1. b	p	m	f	4. j	q	x
2. d	t	n	l	5. z	c	s
3. g	k	h		6. zh	ch	sh r

B.1: b, p, m, f

b is different from its English counterpart. It is not voiced, as the vocal cords do not vibrate, and sounds more like the “p” in the English word “speak.”

p is aspirated. In other words, there is a strong puff of breath when the consonant is pronounced. It is also voiceless.

m is produced in the same manner as the English m. It is voiced.

Pronounce f as you would in English.

Only the simple finals a, o, i, and u and the compound finals that start with a, o, i, or u can be combined with b, p, and m; only the simple finals a, o, and u and the compound finals which start with a, o, or u can be combined with f. When these initials are combined with o, there is actually a short u sound in between. For instance, the syllable bo (buo) actually includes a very short u sound between b and o.



Practice:

B.1.A

ba	bi	bu	bo
pa	pi	pu	po
ma	mi	mu	mo
fa	fu	fo	

B.1.B b vs. p

ba	pa	bu	pu
po	bo	pi	bi

B.1.C m vs. f

ma	fa	mu	fu
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B.1.D b, p, m, f

bo	po	mo	fo
fu	mu	pu	bu

B.2: d, t, n, l

When pronouncing d, t, n, the tip of the tongue touches the gum of the upper teeth. The tongue is raised more to the back than it would be to pronounce their English counterparts. When pronouncing l, the tip of the tongue should touch the palate. d and t are voiceless, and n is nasal.

Only the simple finals a, i, e, and u and the compound finals which start with a, i, e, or u can be combined with d, t, n, and l; n and l can also be combined with ü and the compound finals which start with ü.



Practice:

B.2.A

da	di	du	de	
ta	ti	tu	te	
na	ni	nu	ne	nü
la	li	lu	le	lü

B.2.B d vs. t

da	ta	di	ti
du	tu	de	te

B.2.C l vs. n

lu	lü	nu	nü
lu	nu	lü	nü

B.2.D d, t, n, l

le	ne	te	de
du	tu	lu	nu

B.3: g, k, h

g is unaspirated and voiceless, and k is aspirated and voiceless. When pronouncing g and k, the back of the tongue is raised against the soft palate. The Pinyin g sounds like the “k” in the English word “sky.”

h is voiceless. When pronouncing h, the back of the tongue is raised towards the soft palate. The friction is noticeable. With its English counterpart, however, the friction is not noticeable.

Only the simple finals a, e, and u and the compound finals that start with a, e, or u can be combined with g, k, and h.



Practice:

B.3.A

gu	ge	ga
ku	ke	ka
hu	he	ha

B.3.B g vs. k

gu	ku	ge	ke
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B.3.C g vs. h

gu	hu	ge	he
----	----	----	----

B.3.D k vs. h

ke	he	ku	hu
----	----	----	----

B.3.E g, k, h

gu	ku	hu
he	ke	ge

B.4: j, q, x

To make the j sound, first raise the flat center of the tongue to the roof of the mouth and position the tip of the tongue against the back of the bottom teeth, and then loosen the tongue and let the air squeeze out through the channel thus made. It is unaspirated and the vocal cords do not vibrate. Chinese j is similar to the English j as in “jeep,” but it is unvoiced and articulated with the tip of the tongue resting behind the lower incisors. You also need to pull the corners of your mouth straight back to pronounce j.

q is pronounced in the same manner as j, but it is aspirated. Chinese q is similar to the English ch as in “cheese,” except that it is articulated with the tip of the tongue resting behind the lower incisors. Don’t forget to pull the corners of your mouth straight back.

To make the x sound, first raise the flat center of the tongue toward (but not touching) the hard palate and then let the air squeeze out. The vocal cords do not vibrate. x, like j and q, is articulated with the tip of the tongue resting behind the lower incisors. To pronounce x correctly, you also need to pull the corners of your mouth straight back, like squeezing a smile.

The finals that can be combined with j, q and x are limited to i and ü and the compound finals which start with i or ü. When j, q and x are combined with ü or a compound final starting with ü, the umlaut is omitted and the ü appears as u.



Practice:

B.4.A

ji	ju
qi	qu
xi	xu

B.4.B j vs. q

ji	qi	ju	qu
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B.4.C q vs. x

qi	xi	qu	xu
----	----	----	----

B.4.D j vs. x

ji	xi	ju	xu
----	----	----	----

B.4.E j, q, x

ji	qi	xi
ju	qu	xu

B.5: z, c, s

z is similar to the English ds sound as in “lids.”

c is similar to the English ts sound as in “students.” It is aspirated.

s is similar to the English s sound.

The above group of sounds is pronounced with the tongue touching the back of the upper teeth.

The simple finals that can be combined with z, c, s are a, e, u and the front apical vowel i. (Not the regular palatal high front vowel i.)

In pronouncing the syllables zi, ci and si the tongue is held in the same position throughout the syllable except that it is slightly relaxed as the articulation moves from the voiceless initial consonant to the voiced vowel.



Practice:

B.5.A

za	zu	ze	zi
ca	cu	ce	ci
sa	su	se	si

B.5.B s vs. z

sa	za	su	zu
se	ze	si	zi

B.5.C z vs. c

za	ca	zi	ci
ze	ce	zu	cu

B.5.D s vs. c

sa	ca	si	ci
su	cu	se	ce

B.5.E z, c, s

sa	za	ca
su	zu	cu
se	ze	ce
si	zi	ci
za	ca	se
ci	sa	zu
su	zi	ce

 **B.6 zh, ch, sh, r**

To make the zh sound, first curl up the tip of the tongue against the hard palate, then loosen it and let the air squeeze out the channel thus made. It is unaspirated and the vocal cords do not vibrate. zh sounds rather like the first sound in “jerk,” but it is unvoiced and produced with the tip of the tongue raised against the hard palate.

ch is pronounced in the same manner as zh, but ch is aspirated. ch sounds rather like the “ch” in “chirp” except that it is produced with the tip of the tongue raised against the hard palate.

To make the sh sound, turn up the tip of the tongue toward (but not touching) the hard palate and then let the air squeeze out. The vocal cords do not vibrate. sh sounds rather like the “sh” in “shirt” and “Shirley” except that it is produced with the tip of the tongue raised against the hard palate.

r is pronounced in the same manner as sh, but it is voiced, therefore the vocal cords vibrate. You can pronounce it simply by prolonging sh, but make sure your lips are not rounded.

The finals that can be combined with zh, ch, sh, r are a, e, u and the back apical vowel i, as well as the compound finals which start with a, e, or u. In pronouncing the syllables zhi, chi, shi and ri the tongue is held in the same position throughout the syllable except that it is slightly relaxed as the articulation moves from the initial consonant to the vowel.



Practice:

B.6.A

zha	zhu	zhe	zhi
cha	chu	che	chi
sha	shu	she	shi
ru	re	ri	

B.6.C zh vs. ch

zha	cha	zhu	chu
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B.6.E zh, ch, sh

shi	zhi	chi	shi
she	zhe	che	she

B.6.G r vs. l

lu	ru	li	ri
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B.6.I zh, ch, r

zhe	re	che	re
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B.6.B zh vs. sh

sha	zha	shu	zhu
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B.6.D ch vs. sh

chu	shu	sha	cha
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B.6.F sh vs. r

shu	ru	shi	ri
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B.6.H sh, r, l

she	re	le	re
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B.6.J zh, ch, sh, r

sha	cha	zha	
shu	zhu	chu	ru
zhi	chi	shi	ri
che	zhe	she	re

A Reference Chart for Initials

	UNASPIRATED STOPS	ASPIRATED STOPS	NASALS	FRICATIVES	VOICED CONTINUANTS
<i>Labials</i>	b	p	m	f	w*
<i>Alveolars</i>	d	t	n	l	
<i>Dental sibilants</i>	z	c		s	
<i>Retroflexes</i>	zh	ch		sh	r
<i>Palatals</i>	j	q		x	y*
<i>Velars</i>	g	k		h	

* See explanations of w and y in the “Spelling Rules” section on the next page.



C. Compound Finals:

1.	ai	ei	ao	ou					
2.	an	en	ang	eng	ong				
3.	ia	iao	ie	iu*	ian	in	iang	ing	iong
4.	ua	uo	uai	ui**	uan	un***	uang	ueng	
5.	üe	üan	ün						
6.	er								

* The main vowel **o** is omitted in the spelling of the final **iu** (**iu** = **iou**). Therefore, **iu** represents the sound **iou**. The **o** is especially conspicuous in third and fourth tone syllables.

** The main vowel **e** is omitted in the final **ui** (**ui** = **uei**). Like **iu** above, it is quite conspicuous in third and fourth tone syllables.

*** The main vowel **e** is omitted in **un** (**un** = **uen**).

In Chinese, compound finals are composed of a main vowel and one or two secondary vowels, or a main vowel and one secondary vowel followed by one of the nasal endings **-n** or **-ng**. When the initial vowels are **a**, **e**, and **o**, they are stressed. The vowels following are soft and brief. When the initial vowels are **i**, **u**, and **ü**, the main vowels come after them. **i**, **u** and **ü** are transitional sounds. If there are vowels or nasal consonants after the main vowels, they should be unstressed as well. In a compound final, the main vowel can be affected by the phonemes before and after it. For instance, the **a** in **ian** is pronounced with a lower degree of aperture and a higher position of the tongue than the **a** in **ma**; and to pronounce the **a** in **ang** the tongue has to be positioned more to the back of the mouth than the **a** elsewhere.

When pronouncing the **e** in **ei**, the tongue has to be positioned a bit toward the front and a bit higher than pronouncing the simple vowel **e** alone. The **e** in **ie** is pronounced with a lower position of the tongue than the **e** in **ei**. When pronouncing the **e** in **en** and the **e** in a neutral tone like the second syllable of **gēgē**, the tongue position should be in the center, like the **e** in “the.”

As noted above, in *Pinyin* orthography some vowels are omitted for the sake of economy, e.g., **i(o)u**, **u(e)i**. However, when pronouncing those sounds, the vowels must not be omitted.

SPELLING RULES

- If there is no initial consonant before **i**, **i** is written as a semi-vowel, **y**. Thus **ia**, **ie**, **iao**, **iu**, **ian**, **iang** become **ya**, **ye**, **yao**, **you** (note that the **o** cannot be omitted here), **yan**, **yang**. Before **in** and **ing**, add **y**, e.g., **yin** and **ying**.
- If there is no initial consonant before **ü**, add a **y** and drop the umlaut: **yu**, **yuan**, **yue**, **yun**.
- u** becomes **w** if it is not preceded by an initial, e.g., **wa**, **wai**, **wan**, **wang**, **wei**, **wen**, **weng**, **wo**. **u** by itself becomes **wu**.
- ueng** is written as **ong** if preceded by an initial, e.g., **tong**, **dong**, **nong**, **long**. Without an initial, it is **weng**.
- In order to avoid confusion, an apostrophe is used to separate two syllables with connecting vowels, e.g., **nǚ'ér** (daughter) and the city **Xī'ān** (**nǚ** and **ér**, **Xī** and **ān** are separate syllables). Sometimes an apostrophe is also needed when there are confusions even if the two syllables are not connected by vowels, e.g., **fáng'ài** (to hinder) and **fāng'àn** (plan; scheme).



Practice

C.1:ai	ei	ao	ou
pai	lei	dao	gou
cai	mei	sao	shou

C.2:an en ang eng ong

C.2.A an vs. ang

tan	tang	chan	chang
zan	zhang	gan	gang

C.2.B en vs. eng

sen	seng	shen	sheng
zhen	zheng	fen	feng

C.2.C eng vs. ong

cheng	chong	deng	dong
zheng	zhong	keng	kong

C.3: ia iao ie iu ian in iang ing iong

C.3.A ia vs. ie

jia	jie	qia	qie
xia	xie	ya	ye

C.3.C in vs. ing

bin	bing	pin	ping
jin	jing	yin	ying

C.3.E ao vs. iao

zhao	jiao	shao	xiao
chao	qiao	ao	yao

C.3.g ang vs. iang

zhang	jiang	shang	xiang
chang	qiang	ang	yang

C.3.B ian vs. iang

xian	xiang	qian	qiang
jian	jiang	yan	yang

C.3.D iu vs. iong

xiu	xiong	you	yong
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C.3.F an vs. ian

chan	qian	shan	xian
zhan	jian	an	yan

C.4: ua uo uai ui uan un uang

C.4.A ua vs. uai

shua	shuai	wa	wai
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C.4.B uan vs. uang

shuan	shuang	chuan	chuang
zhuan	zhuang	wan	wang

C.4.C un vs. uan

dun	duan	kun	kuan
zhun	zhuan	wen	wan

C.4.D uo vs. ou

duo	dou	zhuo	zhou
suo	sou	wo	ou

C.4.E ui vs. un

tui	tun	zhui	zhun
dui	dun	wei	wen

C.5: üe üan ün

C.5.A ün vs. un

jun	zhun	yun	wen
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C.5.B üan vs. uan

xuan	shuan	juan	zhuang
quan	chuan	yuan	wan

C.5.C üe

yue	que	jue	
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C.6: er

ger*

* Due to the lack of words with first tone in them, the word "ger" (ge with r ending) is here to give the reader a feel for it. See **D.1 Practice III** below for more examples.

D. Tones

Every Chinese syllable has a tone.

D.1: Four Tones and Neutral Tone:

There are four tones in Modern Standard Chinese: the first tone, the second tone, the third tone, and the fourth tone.

The first tone is a high level tone with a pitch value of 55 (see chart below); its tone mark is “—”.

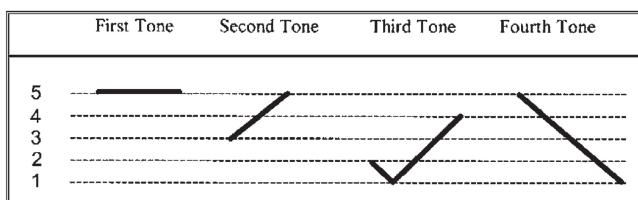
The second tone is a rising tone with a pitch value of 35; its tone mark is “ˊ”.

The citation form of the third tone has a pitch value of 214. However, in normal speech it almost always occurs as a “half third tone” with a pitch value of 21. Its tone mark is “ˇ”. Please see D.2: Tone Sandhi for discussions on how to pronounce third tone syllables in succession.

The fourth tone is a falling tone with a pitch value of 51; its tone mark is “ˋ”.

In addition to the four tones, there is also a neutral tone (qīngshēng) in Modern Standard Chinese. Neutral tone words include those that do not have fundamental tones (e.g., the question particle ma), and those which do have tones when pronounced individually, but are not stressed in certain compounds (e.g., the second ba in bàba or “father”). There are no tone marks for neutral tone syllables. A neutral tone syllable is pronounced briefly and softly, and its pitch value is determined by the stressed syllable immediately before it. A neutral tone following a first tone syllable, as in māma (mother), carries a pitch tone of 2. When it follows a second tone syllable, a third tone syllable, or a fourth tone syllable, its pitch value will be 3, 4, and 1 respectively.

Tones are very important in Chinese. The same syllable with different tones can have different meanings. For instance, mā is mother, má is hemp, mǎ is horse, mà is to scold, ma is an interrogative particle. The four tones can be diagrammed as follows:



Tone marks are written above the main vowel of a syllable. The main vowel can be identified according to the following sequence: a-o-e-i-u-ü. For instance, in ao the main vowel is a. In ei the main vowel is e. There is one exception: when i and u are combined into a syllable, the tone mark is written on the second vowel: iú, úi.



D.1 Practice I: Monosyllabic Words

1.A Four Tones

bī	bí	bǐ	bì
pū	pú	pǔ	pù
dà	dǎ	dá	dā
shè	shě	shé	shē
tí	tī	tǐ	tì
kè	kě	kē	ké
jǐ	jí	jì	jī
gú	gù	gū	gǔ

1.B 1st vs. 2nd

zā	zá
chū	chú
hé	hé
shī	shí

1.C 1st vs. 3rd

tū	tǔ
mō	mǒ

1.D 1st vs. 4th

fā	fà
dī	dì

xī	xǐ	qū	qu
shā	shǎ	kē	kè
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.E	2nd vs. 1st	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.F	2nd vs. 3rd
hú	hū	gé	gě
xí	xī	tí	tǐ
zhé	zhē	jú	jǔ
pó	pō	rú	rǔ
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.G	2nd vs. 4th	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.H	3rd vs. 1st
lú	lù	tǎ	tā
mó	mò	mǐ	mī
cí	cì	gǔ	gū
zhé	zhè	chě	chē
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.I	3rd vs. 2nd	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.J	3rd vs. 4th
chǔ	chú	bǒ	bò
kě	ké	nǐ	nì
xǐ	xí	chǔ	chù
qǔ	qu	rě	rè
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.K	4th vs. 1st	<input type="checkbox"/> 1.L	4th vs. 2nd
jì	jī	nà	ná
là	lā	zè	zé
sù	sū	jù	jú
hè	hē	lù	lú
<input type="checkbox"/> 1.M	4th vs. 3rd		
sà	sǎ		
zì	zǐ		
kù	kǔ		
zhè	zhě		

**D.1 Practice II: Bisyllabic Words**

2.a	1st+1st:	chūzū	tūchū	chūfā
2.b	1st+2nd:	chātú	xīqí	chūxí
2.c	1st+3rd:	shēchǐ	gēqǔ	chūbǎn
2.d	1st+4th:	chūsè	hūshì	jīlù
2.e	2nd+1st:	shíshī	qíjī	shíchā
2.f	2nd+2nd:	jíhé	shépí	píge
2.g	2nd+3rd:	jítǐ	bóqǔ	zhélí
2.h	2nd+4th:	qítè	fúlì	chíxù
2.i	3rd+1st:	zūzhī	zhǔjī	lǐkē
2.j	3rd+2nd:	pǔjí	zhǔxí	chūfá
2.k	3rd+4th:	lǚkè	gǔlì	tǐzhì

2.l	4th+1st:	zìsī	qìchē	lùshī
2.m	4th+2nd:	fùzá	dìtú	shìshí
2.n	4th+3rd:	zìjǐ	bìhǔ	dìzhǐ
2.o	4th+4th:	mùdì	xùmù	dàdì

**D.1 Practice III: Words with “er” sound**

3.a	érzi	érqiě
3.b	ěrduo	mù’ěr
3.c	shí’èr	èrshí

**D.2: Tone Sandhi**

If two third tone syllables are spoken in succession, the first third tone becomes second tone. This tone change is known as *tone sandhi* in linguistics. For instance,

xǐlǐ	→	xílǐ	(baptism)
chǐrǔ	→	chírǔ	(shame)
qǔshě	→	qúshě	(accept or reject)

Note: Following standard *Pinyin* practice, we do not change the tone marks from third to second tone. Initially the student might have to consciously remember that the first syllable actually is pronounced in the second tone, but through practice and by imitating the teacher, it will soon become an automatic habit.

**D.2 Practice**

chǔlǐ	→	chúlǐ	gǔpǔ	→	gúpǔ
bǐnǚ	→	bínǚ	jǔzhǐ	→	júzhǐ
zǐnǚ	→	zínǚ	zhǐshǐ	→	zhíshǐ

**D.3: Neutral Tone**

The neutral tone occurs in unstressed syllables. It is unmarked. For instance,

chēzi (car)	māma (mom)	chúzi (cook)
shūshu (uncle)	lǐzi (plum)	shìzi (persimmon)

**D.3 Practice**

1. māma	gēge	shīfu	chūqu
2. dízi	bóbo	bízi	chúle
3. lǐzi	qǐzi	dǐzi	fǔshang
4. bàba	dìdi	kèqi	kùzi

E. Combination Exercises



I.

shān	xiān	sān
cháng	qiáng	cáng
zhǐ	jǐ	zǐ
lüè	nüè	yuè
kè	lè	rè



II.

Zhōngguó	xīngqī	lùshī	zhàopiàn
zàijiàn	tóngxué	xǐhuan	diànshì
yīnyuè	kělè	yǎnlèi	shàngwǔ
cèsuǒ	chūntiān	xiàwǔ	bànyè
gōngkè	kāishǐ	rìjì	cāntīng
zuìjìn	xīwàng	yīsheng	chūzū
zhōumò	guānxì	dòufu	jiéhūn
liúxué	nǚ'ér	shénme	suīrán
wǎngqiú	xǐzǎo	niánjí	yóuyǒng

III. The Chinese Writing System

A. The Formation of Chinese Characters

Unlike English, which is an alphabetic language, Chinese writing is represented by “characters,” each of which represents a syllable. Characters are traditionally divided into the following six categories:

1. 象形 xiàngxíng pictographs, pictographic characters

EXAMPLES:

人	亼	rén	person
山	乚	shān	mountain
日	乚	rì	sun
月	乚	yuè	moon
木	乚	mù	tree

2. 指事 zhǐshì self-explanatory characters

EXAMPLES:

上	一	shàng	above
下	一	xià	below

3. 会意 huìyì associative compounds

EXAMPLES:

明	日月	míng	bright
休	人木	xiū	rest

4. 形声 xíngshēng pictophonetic characters (with one element indicating meaning and the other sound)

EXAMPLES: 江, 河, 饭, 姑

5. 转注 zhǎnzhù mutually explanatory characters

EXAMPLES: 老, 考

6. 假借 jiǎjiè phonetic loan characters

EXAMPLES: 来, 我

A popular myth is that Chinese writing is pictographic, and that each Chinese character represents a picture. It is true that some Chinese characters evolved from pictures, but these comprise only a small proportion of the characters. The vast majority of Chinese characters are pictophonetic characters consisting of a radical and a phonetic element. The radical often suggests the meaning of a character, and the phonetic element indicates its original pronunciation, which may or may not represent its modern pronunciation.

B. Basic Chinese Radicals

Although there are more than fifty thousand Chinese characters in existence, one only needs to know two or three thousand to be considered literate. Mastering two or three thousand characters is, of course, still a rather formidable task. However, the learning process will be more effective and easier if one knows well the basic components of Chinese characters. Traditionally, Chinese characters are grouped together according to their common components known as "radicals" (部首, bùshǒu). The 214 "Kangxi radicals" have been the standard set of radicals since the publication of the great *Kangxi Dictionary* (康熙字典, Kāngxī Zìdiǎn) in 1716, although some contemporary dictionaries, which treat simplified characters as primary forms, have reduced that number to 189. By knowing the radicals and other basic components well, you will find recognizing, remembering and reproducing characters much easier. Knowing the radicals is also a must when using dictionaries that arrange characters according to their radicals. The following is a selection of forty radicals that everybody should know well when starting to learn characters.

Chinese radical	Pinyin	English	Examples
1. 人 (亼)	rén	person	今, 他
2. 刀 (丿)	dāo	knife	分, 到
3. 力	lì	power	加, 助
4. 又	yòu	right hand; again	友, 取
5. 口	kǒu	mouth	叫, 可
6. 口 **	wéi	enclose	回, 因
7. 土	tǔ	earth	在, 坐
8. 夕	xī	sunset	外, 多
9. 大	dà	big	天, 太
10. 女	nǚ	woman	婆, 好
11. 子	zǐ	son	字, 孩
12. 寸	cùn	inch	寺, 封
13. 尺	xiǎo	small	少, 尖
14. 工	gōng	labor; work	左, 差
15. 禾	yāo	tiny; small	幻, 幼
16. 弓	gōng	bow	引, 弟
17. 心 (忄)	xīn	heart	想, 忙
18. 戈	gē	dagger-axe	我, 或
19. 手 (扌)	shǒu	hand	拿, 打
20. 日	rì	sun	早, 明
21. 月	yuè	moon	期, 朗
22. 木	mù	wood	李, 杯
23. 水 (氵)	shuǐ	water	永, 洗
24. 火 (灬)	huǒ	fire	烧, 热

25.	田	tián	field	男 , 留
26.	目	mù	eye	看 , 睡
27.	示 (宀)	shì	show	票 , 社
28.	糸 (纟)	mì	fine silk	素 , 红
29.	耳	ěr	ear	聳 , 聊
30.	衣 (衤)	yī	clothing	袋 , 衫
31.	言 (讠)	yán	speech	誓 , 说
32.	贝	bèi	cowrie shell	贵 , 财
33.	走	zǒu	walk	趣 , 起
34.	足	zú	foot	跳 , 跑
35.	金 (钅)	jīn	gold	鑑 , 钱
36.	门	mén	door	间 , 闷
37.	隹	zhuī	short-tailed bird	难 , 集
38.	雨	yǔ	rain	零 , 雲
39.	食 (饣)	shí	eat	餐 , 饭
40.	马	mǎ	horse	骑 , 驂

(** = used as radical only, not as a character by itself)



Two Chinese radical charts.

C. Basic Strokes

The following is a list of basic strokes:

Basic stroke	Chinese	Pinyin	English	Examples
1. “丶”	点	diǎn	dot	小，六
2. “一”	横	héng	horizontal	一，六
3. “丨”	竖	shù	vertical	十，中
4. “丿”	撇	piě	downward left	人，大
5. “乚”	捺	nà	downward right	八，人
6. “フ”	提	tí	upward	我，江
7. “フ”	横钩	hénggōu	horizontal hook	你，字
8. “丨”	竖钩	shùgōu	vertical hook	小，你
9. “フ”	斜钩	xiégōu	slanted hook	戈，我
10. “フ”	横折	héngzhé	horizontal bend	五，口
11. “フ”	竖折	shùzhé	vertical bend	七，亡

Note: With the exception of the “tí” stroke (which moves upward to the right) and the “piě” stroke (which moves downward to the left), all Chinese strokes move from top to bottom, and from left to right.

D. Stroke Order

Following is a list of rules of stroke order. When writing a Chinese character, it is important that you follow the rules. Following the rules will make it easier for you to accurately count the number of strokes in a character. Knowing the exact number of strokes in a character will help you find the character in a radical-based dictionary. Also, your Chinese characters will look better if you write them in the correct stroke order!

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|
| 1. From left to right | (川，人) |
| 2. From top to bottom | (三) |
| 3. Horizontal before vertical | (十) |
| 4. From outside to inside | (月) |
| 5. Middle before two sides | (小) |
| 6. Inside before closing | (日，回) |

Note: Learn the correct stroke order of the characters introduced in this book by using the *Integrated Chinese Level 1 Part 1 Character Workbook*.

IV. Useful Expressions



A. Classroom Expressions

The following is a list of classroom expressions that you will hear every day in your Chinese class.

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Nǐ hǎo! | How are you? How do you do? |
| 2. Lǎoshī hǎo! | How are you, teacher? |
| 3. Shàng kè. | Let's begin the class. |
| 4. Xià kè. | The class is over. |
| 5. Dǎ kāi shū. | Open the book. |
| 6. Wǒ shuō, nǐmen tīng. | I'll speak, you listen. |
| 7. Kàn hēibǎn. | Look at the blackboard. |
| 8. Duì bu duì? | Is it right? |
| 9. Duì! | Right! Correct! |
| 10. Hěn hǎo! | Very good! |
| 11. Qǐng gēn wǒ shuō. | Please repeat after me. |
| 12. Zài shuō yí biàn. | Say it again. |
| 13. Dǒng bu dǒng? | Do you understand? |
| 14. Dǒng le. | Yes, I/we understand; I/we do. |
| 15. Zàijiàn! | Good-bye! |



B. Survival Expressions

The following is a list of important expressions that will help you survive in a Chinese language environment. A good language student is constantly learning new words by asking questions. Learn the following expressions well and start to acquire Chinese on your own!

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Duìbuqǐ! | Sorry! |
| 2. Qǐng wèn... | Excuse me...; May I ask... |
| 3. Xièxie! | Thanks! |
| 4. Zhè shì shénme? | What is this? |
| 5. Wǒ bù dǒng. | I don't understand. |
| 6. Qǐng zài shuō yí biàn. | Please say it one more time. |
| 7. “...” Zhōngwén zěnme shuō? | How do you say “...” in Chinese? |
| 8. “...” shì shénme yìsi? | What does “...” mean? |
| 9. Qǐng nǐ gěi wǒ... | Please give me... |
| 10. Qǐng nǐ gàosu wǒ... | Please tell me... |



C. Numerals

Having good control of the Chinese numerals will facilitate your dealing with real life situations such as shopping, asking for time and dates, etc. You can get a head start by memorizing 1 to 10 well now.

- | | |
|---------|-------|
| 1. yī | one |
| 2. èr | two |
| 3. sān | three |
| 4. sì | four |
| 5. wǔ | five |
| 6. liù | six |
| 7. qī | seven |
| 8. bā | eight |
| 9. jiǔ | nine |
| 10. shí | ten |

一
二
三
四
五
六
七
八
九
十

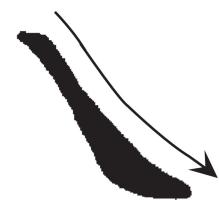
Do you know the names of the strokes below? Can you write them properly?



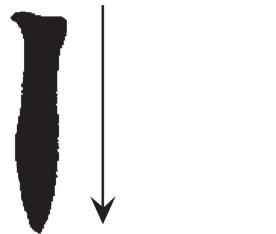
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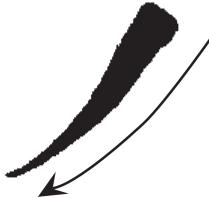
B



C



D



E