

INTRODUCTION

Learning pronunciation in any foreign language may feel like a herculean task at the beginning. This can be especially true in Chinese. While a few sounds are similar to English, others are very much foreign. In addition, one characteristic that sets Chinese apart from many other languages in the world is its tonal nature. This can be a mental barrier to beginning students who may feel it hard to find a foothold in the mastery process. The truth is, English also uses tones to an extent; however, we normally call these instances *intonation* or *inflection*. An example would be the different meanings that can be expressed by how one says “No.” Also, we accentuate different syllables in some

words to tell listeners if we are using the word as a noun or a verb: “I’m working on a project,” versus “I can project this image on the screen.” Chinese has simply taken this function to a more expressive level. This is possible because each character has only one syllable and thus one tone. The challenge for students of Chinese is not learning tones *per se*, but rather converting and expanding latent ability with intonation and stressed syllables in English into tone-perfect Chinese.

To this end, this program has been created to aid you in practicing the various sounds and tones in a systematic manner. While we all have the ability to sing, most people need training to hit each note accurately on a musical score. Similarly,

you must train your voice and mind to set aside your English habits of expression and be able to reproduce the exact sound and tone for each character you say. Without accurate pronunciation and tones, it will be difficult for native Chinese speakers to understand you. On the other hand, increased accuracy enables communication to achieve its true purpose—the exchange of ideas.