

Difficult Sounds

There are several sounds in Chinese that are easily confused or difficult to pronounce correctly. This section will drill you on their proper pronunciation. Since the focus is on sound pronunciation, no tones marks will be added to the syllables. They will, however, all be done in the same tone—a first tone.

1. *ZH-*, *CH-*, *SH-* vs. *J-*, *Q-*, *X-*

The main difference between these pairs is the right side of each pair is pronounced with a clear *ee* sound in the middle of the syllable. Also, the syllables in the left columns are all pronounced with the tip tongue curled up toward the

hard palate (called retroflex or *juǎnshé* 捲舌).

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|-----|-----|------|-----|-------------|
| zha | jia | zhou | jiu | chang qiang |
| cha | qia | chou | qiu | shang xiang |
| sha | xia | shou | xiu | chong qiong |

| | | | |
|------|------|------|------|
| zhao | jiao | zhan | jian |
| chao | qiao | chan | qian |
| shao | xiao | shan | xian |