

A PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS **E-BOOK**

# First Step

An Elementary Reader for  
Modern Chinese

CHIH-P'ING CHOU, JING WANG

JUN LEI



PRINCETON

FIRST STEP

中文起步

# The Princeton Language Program: Modern Chinese

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# FIRST STEP

# 中文起步

An Elementary Reader for Modern Chinese

Chih-p'ing Chou  
Jing Wang  
Jun Lei

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# 序

过去三十年来，美国中文教学界在教材的编写和教学法的研究上都有可观的成绩。一般说来，我们可以把发展的趋势概括为：中文教学受到大量西方二语习得理论和教学法的影响，对外汉语教学的重点渐渐地由传统句型语法的操练转向语言实际的运用。在这个转变中，听说能力的训练受到重视，而“听说领先，读写跟进”的授课程序，也渐渐地为大家所接受。早期在课堂中逐句翻译的教法，已经成了上世纪的历史。汉语教学不再为汉学研究服务，而成了一门独立的学科。这个发展是符合美国学生学习汉语的动机和要求的。

但在这个转变的过程中，速成和功利的要求也伴随而来，初级入门的课程，不再在发音的准确和语法句型的熟练上着力，而只片面的强调学生在语言实践中是否能完成某项“任务”或“工作”，而忽略了，无论是交际的进行，还是任务的完成，都必须在熟悉了词汇，句型和语法的基础上才有达成的可能。

《中文起步》希望能兼顾语言的准确与流利，结构与功能。全书集中在现代汉语语音和基本语法结构的介绍，并出之以日常生活的话题，对话尽量做到生动有趣，并能和实际生活结合。课文中所涉及到的中国文化或某些特殊的生活习俗，则以专门的注释说明。希望学生在完成本书的学习之后，对汉语的语音有准确的掌握，对语法有基本的了解，并进而能在汉语的环境中应付日常之所需。

《中文起步》初编于四年前，逐年在内容上有所改进和增添，并同时在新泽西大学进行试用。为了便于使用，本书分装成两册，第一册是课文，生词和语法，第二册是练习和作业。在编写和试用的过程中，普大对外汉语教研室的老师提出了许多宝贵的意见，Teng-Kuan Ng, Noelle Lyle, Cara Healey 和 Jenny Yu 四位同事仔细校看了英文，我们在此表示诚挚的谢意。当然，书中如有任何错误，都是作者的责任。

周质平

王静

雷俊

2013年5月8日



# PREFACE

There have been considerable achievements in the field of Chinese teaching in the United States over the past thirty years, in terms of both the production of teaching materials and pedagogical research. Generally speaking, the trend of this development can be summarized in the following two aspects: first, Chinese pedagogy has been significantly influenced by Western theories of second language acquisition; second, the focus of Chinese teaching has been transformed from the traditional drill of sentence patterns and grammar to the more practical approach of language use. During the process of this transition, the training of listening and speaking abilities has been emphasized, and the instructional procedure of “listening and speaking taking the leading role, and reading and writing following right after” has gradually been accepted. The early stages of direct translation from Chinese to English in the classroom found their resting place in a part of the last century’s history. Chinese language teaching is no longer subordinate to Sinology, but has become an independent discipline. Such developments in Chinese language pedagogy help to answer the needs and motivations of American students.

In this transformation, however, demands for speed and utility are in order. Elementary courses no longer pay attention to the accuracy of students’ pronunciation and the establishment of a solid foundation of grammar and sentence structure, but solely emphasize whether students can put the language to practice by completing a certain “task” or “assignment.” Such an approach neglects the fact that both communication and task completion are possible only after one becomes familiar with the vocabulary, sentence patterns, and grammatical structure.

*First Step* takes into account the accuracy, fluency, structure, and functionality of the language and applies all of these aspects to the teaching process. The entire book focuses on introducing the basics of modern Chinese phonology and grammatical structure, which are conveyed to students through everyday topics. The dialogues are lively and interesting and represent real-life situations. Furthermore, characteristics of Chinese culture and some special customs, which are reflected in the language, are accompanied by additional explanatory notes. It is our goal that students will have an accurate grasp of pronunciation and a basic understanding of grammar upon completing the lessons in this book, so that they will be able to meet the challenges of practical daily communication in a Chinese environment.

The compilation of *First Step* was initiated four years ago. The content was gradually enhanced with additional materials and field-tested in the classrooms of Princeton University. To facilitate students’ and instructors’ use of this textbook, it is divided into two volumes: the textbook includes lessons, vocabulary, and grammar; the workbook provides exercises. In the process of preparation and field-testing, teachers from the Chinese language program at Princeton University provided many valuable suggestions, with Teng-Kuan Ng, Noelle Lyle, Cara Healey, and Jenny Yu carefully editing the English sections along the way. We would like to express our sincerest gratitude to them. Nonetheless, the authors take full responsibility for any errors that may come to light upon usage.

Chih-p’ing Chou  
Jing Wang  
Jun Lei  
May 8, 2013

# AUDIO CONTENT: LISTENING, SPEAKING, AND PRONUNCIATION

Each chapter of *First Step* includes a dialogue and a vocabulary list. You can download and listen to audio versions of these on your smartphone, laptop, or tablet. There are two easy ways of accessing the audio:

- (1) If you have a QR code reader installed on your device, point it at the QR icons located on the first page of each lesson (see below). You will then be able to download the audio files directly onto your device.
- (2) Or go directly to <http://press.princeton.edu/titles/10279.html> to locate and download the audio files, which are organized by lesson.

QR code  
for dialogue  
audio file



QR code for  
vocabulary  
list audio file



CHAPTER

1

Lǎoshī hé Xuéshēng  
(Teacher and Students)

**Pinyin Text**  
(A—Dīng Yì, B—Wáng Ēr, C—Zhāng Sān)  
A: Nínào, nín guìxìng?  
B: Wǒ xìng Wáng, jiào Wáng Ēr. Wǒ shì lǎoshī. Nǐ xìng shénme?  
A: Wǒ xìng Dīng, wǒde míngzì jiào Dīng Yì. Wǒ shì xuéshēng.

**English Translation**  
(A—Ding Yi, B—Wang Er, C—Zhang San)  
A: Hello, what is your honorable surname?  
B: My surname is Wang. I am called Wang Er. I am a teacher. What is your last name?  
A: My last name is Ding and my full name is Ding Yi. I am a student.

老师	老師	lǎoshī	n.	teacher
和		hé	conj.	and
学生	學生	xuéshēng	n.	student
您		nín	pron.	honorific form of singular you
好		hǎo	adj.	good
你(您)好		nǐ(nín)hǎo	greeting	hello
贵	貴	guì	adj.	honorable
贵姓	貴姓	guìxìng	n./v.	honorable surname (is)
我		wǒ	pron.	I; me
姓		xìng	n./v.	last name; have the last name of...
王		Wáng	n.	last name Wang
叫		jiào	v.	to be called
二		èr	num.	two (used when counting; here used as a name)
是		shì	v.	to be (any form of "to be")

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Parts of Speech

adj.	adjective
adv.	adverb
aux.	auxiliary
aux.v.	auxiliary verb
conj.	conjunction
m.w.	measure word
n.	noun
N.P.	noun phrase
num.	number and amount
part.	particle
prep.	preposition
pron.	pronoun
p.w.	place word
q.w.	question word
t.w.	time word
v.	verb
v.c.	verb plus complement
v.o.	verb plus object
V.P.	verb phrase

# MAIN CHARACTERS



丁一  
Dīng Yī



张三  
Zhāng Sān



小英  
Xiǎoyīng



苏三  
Sū Sān



# Hanyu Pinyin Romanization System



## I. Introduction

*Pinyin* 拼音, literally meaning “spell out the sound,” is currently one of the most commonly used Romanization systems for Mandarin Chinese. It is officially known as Hanyu Pinyin (Hanyu means “the Chinese language”). This system was developed by a government committee in China and was initially approved by the government in 1958. It is now widely accepted by international organizations and publications and has been adopted in Taiwan and other Chinese-speaking areas as the official Romanization system. Other systems that were once used in the United States and other overseas areas but now have been replaced by pinyin include Wade-Giles, Gwoyeu Romatzyh (*Guoyu luomazi*), Mandarin Yale, *zhuyin*, and others.

Chinese characters are not like the alphabetical letters of English and other languages, which allow one to read the pronunciation directly from the spelling of a word. Therefore, the pinyin system was created to help describe the pronunciation of standard Mandarin Chinese, and it has become a very useful tool for entering Chinese-language text into computers. All letters of the English alphabet except for “v” are used in the pinyin system. However, the correspondence between letter and sound does not exactly follow that of any other language. Students must pay attention to the difference between pinyin letters and their English counterparts when first studying this Romanization system.

Each pinyin syllable represents a single character. A syllable consists of three parts: initial, final, and tone marker.

## II. Initials and Finals

Initials and finals, not vowels and consonants as in other languages, are the fundamental elements in the pinyin system. In most cases, there is one initial followed by one final in a Chinese syllable. In some cases, a syllable may have only a final, but no initial.

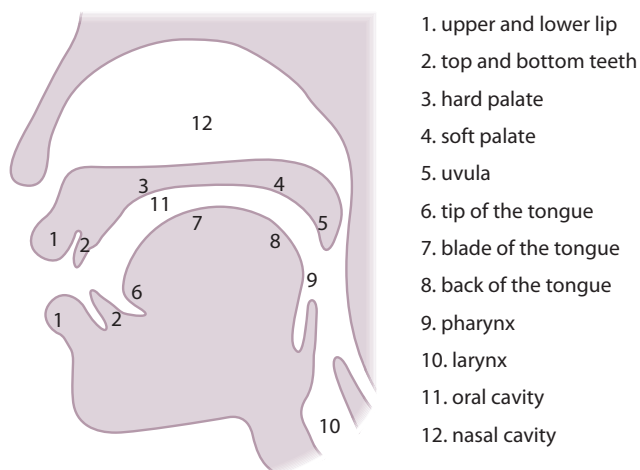


Figure 1 The articulators or organs of speech.

## Initials

There are 21 initials in the pinyin system. In the following table, the leftmost column shows the method of pronunciation of the initials, and the upper row shows their tongue positions.

**Table of Initials**

	Unaspirated	Aspirated	Nasal	Lateral	Fricative	Voiced continuants
Labial	b	p	m		f	
Alveolar	d	t	n	l		
Dental sibilant	z	c			s	
Retroflex	zh	ch			sh	r
Palatal	j	q			x	
Velar	g	k			h	

**Table of Initials (Pronounceable)**

When Chinese people pronounce these initials, they will automatically add a vowel to facilitate the pronunciation.

	1	2	3		4	5
1	bo	po	mo		fo	
2	de	te	ne	le		
3	zi	ci			si	
4	zhi	chi			shi	ri
5	ji	qi			xi	
6	ge	ke			he	

## Pronunciation Guides

These initials have major differences from their English counterparts:

b/d/g: No vibration in the vocal cords.

p/t/k: With strong exhalation.

h: Strong guttural with friction, similar to the German [h].

j: Touch the tip of the tongue to the back of the lower teeth and the front tongue to the front part of the hard palate. Then release the block of the air, and let it come through to make the sound.

q: Similar to the process to pronounce “j,” but with a strong flow of air when making the sound.

x: Touch the tip of the tongue to the back of the lower teeth. Arch the tongue so that the front of the tongue is close to the front of the hard palate and form a small space in between. Let the air come out of the space with friction to make the sound.

zh: Roll the tongue so that the tip of the tongue touches the front part of the hard palate.

Hold the breath and form an enclosed space in the oral cavity. Then quickly release the block and let the air come out of the small passageway.

ch: The first stage to form the block is similar to the pronunciation of “zh,” but when releasing the block to make the sound, there is a strong flow of air.

sh: The front tongue approaches the front part of the hard palate and forms a small space in between.

r: The pronunciation method is the same as for “sh,” but it is voiced.

z: Touch the tip of the tongue to the back of the upper teeth to form a block. At the same time raise the soft palate to close the nose cavity. Quickly release the block to open a small passageway and let the air come out of it to make the sound.

c: The first stage to form the block is similar to the pronunciation of “z,” but when releasing the block to make the sound, there is a strong flow of air.

s: Similar to English “s” as in “snake.”

### Table of Finals

There are 35 finals in the pinyin system, including 7 simple finals, 13 compound finals, and 15 nasal finals.

Simple finals	a [a]	o [o] / uo [ua]	e [ɣ]	
	i [i]	u [u]	ü [ü]	
	-i ([ɿ] / [ʅ])			
Compound finals	ai [ai]	ua [ua]	ia [ia]	üe [yɛ]
	ei [ei]	uai [uai]	ie [iɛ]	
	ao [au]	uei (-ui) [uei]	iao [iau]	
	ou [əu]		iou (-iu) [iəu]	
	er [ɐ]			
Nasal finals	an [an]	uan [uan]	ian [iɛn]	üan [yan]
	en [ən]	uen (-un) [uən]	in [in]	ün [yn]
	ang [aŋ]	uang [uaŋ]	iang [iaŋ]	
	eng [əŋ]	ueng (-ong) [uəŋ]	ing [iŋ]	iong [iʊŋ]

Note:

1. -i [ɿ] appears only in its combination with initials “z,” “c,” and “s.”

zi, ci, si

-i [ʅ] appears only in its combination with initials “zh,” “ch,” and “sh.”

zhi, chi, shi

2. Special final “er”

“Er” is a special final that can be attached to another syllable. Rather than two distinct syllables, the last “er” is contracted with the original syllable, simply written as “-r,” and therefore represented as one syllable. Theoretically, except for “er” itself, all the other syllables in the pinyin system can combine with “er” final to form new syllables. However, customarily only some syllables, especially colloquial words, words that refer to small items, informal actions, or places, and certain adjectives in the repetition form, take the “er” final. The “er” final is optional, and is mostly used by Mandarin speakers in northern China, especially in Beijing.

For example:

wǎn → wǎnr (bowl)

mén → ménr (door)

liáotiān → liáotiānr (to chat)

chànggē → chànggēr (to sing)



### III. Tones

The most distinct feature of Chinese is that it is a tonal language, which makes the pronunciation difficult for English speakers. Yet, in fact, Western languages also have tones. For example, saying “yes” with a rising tone or with a falling tone will express different connotations or emotions, but the meaning of the word will not change or be influenced by the different tones that the speaker chooses. However, tones in Chinese have the important function of differentiating meanings. The same pinyin syllable with different tones will stand for different characters. This is the major difference for the function of tones between a tonal language and a nontonal language.

Tones are differentiated by the voice pitch. Two features of the voice pitch need to be noted. First, the pitch of the tone is a relative concept and not an absolute one. Usually women have a higher pitch than men, and a person’s pitch will change in various situations; for example, a person’s voice pitch will be higher when he or she is excited, but lower when he or she is frustrated. However, such differences will not affect the semantic aspect of a word. Second, any change in pitch level should be a smooth and continuous process.

There are four tones in Mandarin Chinese:

1. the first tone or the high tone
2. the second tone or the rising tone
3. the third tone or the low tone
4. the forth tone or the falling tone

The chart developed by the linguist Chao Yuan Ren (Zhao Yuanren) to mark tone values has been widely accepted in the field of Chinese linguistics and phonology. The vocal range is divided equally into five pitch levels, as marked by the numerals 1 through 5 on a vertical line, with 5 as the highest possible pitch and 1 the lowest. Each of the four tones is thus signified by the starting value and the end value of one’s voice pitch. The arrow indicates the direction of change of pitch during the pronunciation process.

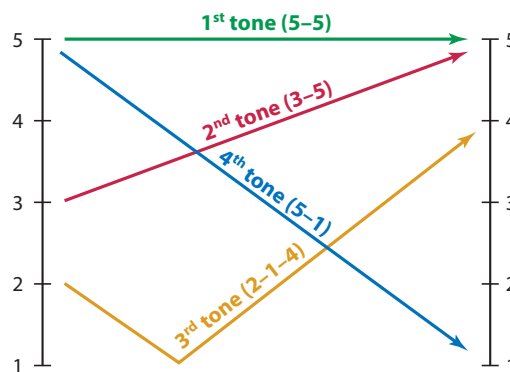


Figure 2 Tone values at five levels.

#### Neutral Tone

When a syllable in a word or in a sentence loses its original tone, it is said to have “neutral tone.” The term was proposed by Zhao Yuanren. Since the syllable loses its original tone, its tonal value is determined by the previous syllable. Generally speaking, a neutral tone after a third tone syllable is relatively higher compared to one that follows a first tone or a second tone syllable. A neutral tone after a fourth tone syllable is the lowest. However, the nuances among these situations are not emphasized in speaking and will not change the meaning of the syllable at all. In summary, the neutral tone is usually short and weak, and no tone marks are needed in Romanizing a neutral tone.

## Tone Marks

The first to fourth tones are marked by tone marks, ˊ ˋ ˋˊ ˋˋ, superimposed over the main vowel of the syllable. Use the following order when marking the tone in a syllable:

“a” “o” “e” “i” “u” “ü”

Note that “a” is the first vowel in the final to look for when placing the tone mark; if there is no “a,” then look for “o” or “e.” When “i” and “u” both appear in the same syllable, put the tone mark on the latter one.

Tone is an essential part of all Chinese syllables and serves to differentiate meanings. Consider, for example, zhū (pig) and zhù (to live), wèn (to ask) and wěn (to kiss), shuìjiào (to sleep) and shuǐjiǎo (dumpling soup), tóngchuāng (literary word for classmate) and tóngchuáng (to share a bed). These syllables are very close in pronunciation but represent totally different characters and therefore meanings. The meaning of these words will not be confusing in reading or writing, but in speaking if one does not pronounce a tone correctly, it can be not only misleading in the intended meaning, but also amusing or even embarrassing. In saying “I want to ask the teacher,” you have to make sure to clearly pronounce the forth tone verb “wèn (to ask),” not the third tone verb “wěn,” which would change the meaning of your sentence to “I want to kiss the teacher.” Therefore, it is essential for students to properly understand and pronounce the tones when they begin studying the Chinese language. Otherwise, they will develop improper habits, and inaccurate pronunciation will become fossilized and will be very difficult to correct.

## Tone Sandhi

There are four tones plus the neutral tone in the pinyin system; however, in speech, the tones are not always pronounced at their original pitch value. Instead tonal pronunciation varies when tones occur in certain combinations. The following are some special rules to consider:

### 1. Half Third Tone

The third tone is pronounced at its full scale only when the syllable appears by itself or at the end of a sentence. When a third tone syllable is followed by other syllables, its pronunciation changes according to special rules.

When followed by a first, second, or fourth tone, a third tone is pronounced as half third tone. The half third tone is a variant of the regular third tone. It begins as the full third tone does, but once it reaches its low point, it remains there without rising again. Therefore, the length of the half third tone is shorter than the full third tone. Consider these examples:

hǎoshū dǎrén shǒupà

### 2. Third Tone Sandhi

When one third tone syllable is immediately followed by another third tone syllable, the first one of the two changes to a second tone. When three or more third tone syllables occur in a row, the third tone sandhi rule telescopes upon itself and changes all but the final syllable to second tone. However, this is not always the case. Depending upon the phrase structure of the string of syllables, or upon whether the speaker chooses to pause, the “telescoping” of the tone sandhi may or may not occur.

Here are some examples:

Original tone	Actual tone	English meaning
yǐzi	yǐzi	chairs
wǔbǎ yǐzi	wúbá yǐzi	five chairs
yǒu wǔbǎ yǐzi	yóu wúbá yǐzi	have/there are five chairs
Wǒ yǒu wǔbǎ yǐzi.	Wó yóu wúbá yǐzi.	I have five chairs.

### 3. Fourth Tone Sandhi

The pitch value of a regular fourth tone is 5-1, while that of the modified fourth tone is 5-3. Therefore, the modified fourth tone is not as strong and emphatic as the regular tone. It starts at the same position as the regular fourth tone, but falls only about half as far as the regular fourth tone. A modified fourth tone is used when two fourth tone syllables follow each other immediately, so the first of the two changes to a modified fourth tone. The emphasis is placed on the second syllable.

yàokàn dànmà màibào zuìhòu

### 4. Special Tone Sandhi for Yi and Bu

*Yi* meaning “one” and *bu* meaning “no, not” are two extremely common words in Chinese. Their original tones are *yī* and *bù*. However, their pronunciations follow the special rules of tone sandhi. When they precede a first, second, or third tone syllable, they are pronounced using fourth tone. When they precede a fourth tone, they are pronounced using second tone.

yìtiān	yìnián	yìmiǎo	yíyàng
yìzhuō	yìchuán	yìzǎo	yíci
bùgāo	bùlái	bùhǎo	búyào
bùshuō	bùtóng	bùshǎo	búduì

## IV. Spelling Rules

There are some special rules to observe when writing Chinese in pinyin.

### 1. The Use of “y” and “w”

When a syllable does not have an initial, it is required that “y” or “w” be used to make the separation between syllables clear. Some specific situations are listed below:

- ▶ When “i” and “u” are used independently as syllables, add “y” and “w” before “i” and “u” respectively.

i → yi      u → wu

- ▶ When “i” appears at the beginning of a syllable and is the only vowel in that syllable, add “y” before “i.”

in → yin    ing → ying

- When “i” and “u” appear at the beginning of a syllable, but there is another vowel in that syllable, change “i” into “y” and “u” into “w,” respectively.

iang → yang      uang → wang

- When “ü” appears at the beginning of a syllable, change “ü” to “u” and add the initial “y” to the beginning.

ü → yu      üan → yuan

## 2. The Use of “ü”

The initials “j,” “q,” and “x” cannot be combined with “u” to form syllables, but they are compatible with “ü.” In writing, “ü” is changed into “u” (the umlaut is dropped) when it combines with “j,” “q,” and “x” to form syllables.

ju      qu      xu

However, the umlaut remains when “ü” combines with other initials, for example “l” and “n.”

lǚ      nǚ

## 3. The Use of “iou,” “uei,” and “uen”

When these three finals combine with initials to form syllables, the middle vowels are dropped, and the finals are written as “iu,” “ui,” and “un.”

liou → liu      duei → dui      chuen → chun

If there is no initial in the syllable, according to rule 1, “y” or “w” need to be used.

iou → you      uei → wei      uen → wen

## 4. The Use of Apostrophes

Syllables that can form a word are usually grouped together in writing. For syllables beginning with “a,” “o,” and “e,” in order to avoid confusion with the previous syllable, an apostrophe is used for separation. Compare the following syllables:

piāo (one syllable): to float	vs.	pí'ǎo (two syllables): leather coat
xiān (one syllable): first	vs.	Xi'ān (two syllables): name of a city

## 5. The Use of Capital Letters

In the following two situations, the first letter of the first syllable needs to be capitalized.

Proper nouns

Personal names:	Máo Zédōng	
Place names:	Běijīng	Měiguó (the United States)

The beginning of a sentence

Wǒ shì Zhōngguó rén. (I am Chinese.)

## Exercises

### I. Pronounce the following tone combinations.

#### 1. First tone with other tones

tātīng  
hētāng  
tīngzhōng

tālái  
shūnán  
Zhōngguó

tādǒng  
hēshuǐ  
Zhōng Měi

tāmà  
dāngdài  
chīyào

#### 2. Second tone with other tones

shéishuō  
méngāo

shéilái  
wéilán

shéizǒu  
nándǒng

shéiqù  
xuébào

#### 3. Third tone with other tones

wǒtīng  
nǐchī  
dǎzhōng  
hǎohē

wǒlái  
nǐlái  
dǎshéi  
hǎorén

wǒxiě  
nǐhǎo  
dǎgǒu  
hěnyuǎn

wǒqù  
nǐyào  
dǎyào  
wǒkùn

#### 4. Fourth tone with other tones

yàotīng  
dàshū

yàolái  
kànshéi

yàomǎi  
fànwǎn

yàomài  
kànbào

### II. Neutral Tone

#### 1. Pronounce the following words.

tīngle  
tāde  
àiren  
duìtou

lāile  
liángde  
bāba  
jìxing

dǒngle  
wǒde  
bāngshou  
pánsuan

què  
huàide  
lánzi  
zuōfang

#### 2. Read the following tongue twister, and pay attention to the neutral tones.

Zuò mǎimai

Doing Business

Mǎimai rén zuò mǎimai

Businessmen do business

Mǎimai bùgōng méi mǎimai

If unfair, there will be no business

Méi mǎimai méiqián zuò mǎimai

No business, no money for business

Mǎimai rén zuò mǎimai děi shízai

Businessmen must be honest in doing business

### III. Pronounce the following words. Pay attention to the tone change of "yi" and "bu."

diyī  
yìwǔyìshí  
yídìng

yìzhí  
yìběnwànlì  
yíci

yìqǐ  
yìfānfēngshùn  
yíwèi

yíchàngyíhè	yìxīnyíyì	yìmúyíyàng
bùdǒng	bùlái	bùzhīdào
bùliǎojiě	bùyǎnwànlǐ	
búhuì	búqù	búzài
búyào	bùlǐbúqì	bújiàbúsè

**IV. Read the following words with the “er” final.**

dāobàr	hàomǎr	míngpáir
xiédàir	zhàlánr	shōutānr
yàofāngr	yíkuàir	diàojiàr
yíxiàr	zhàopiànr	chàdiǎnr
yǎnjìngr	huāyàng	nǎoguār
chāguǎnr	huǒguōr	yóuchuōr
fànguǎnr	xiǎotōur	miàntiáor
shǒutàor	hútòngr	zàizhèr

**V. Read the following words, phrases and sentences.**

kǎoshì	yíkuàir	xiàbān
rìzi	hǎohāor	xiāofèi
píjiǔ	shuōmíng	fāndiàn
xiàtiān	fēicháng	rèliè
báicài	qīnlüè	xióngmāo
zēngjiā	dōngnán	niánqīng
zúqiú	fēijī	zuòhuór
jùbèi	gǎozhǐ	chūnjuǎnr
gǎn xìngqu	shāndōng	kǒuyīn
yīngxióng hǎohàn	shānmíng shuǐxiù	suān tián kǔ là

Wǒ shì Měiguó rén.  
Yínián zhī jì zàiyú chūn.

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1

Lǎoshī hé Xuéshēng  
(Teacher and Students)



Pinyin Text

(A—Dīng Yī, B—Wáng Èr, C—Zhāng Sān)  
A: Nínǎo, nín guìxìng?  
B: Wǒ xìng Wáng, jiào Wáng Èr. Wǒ shì  
lǎoshī. Nǐ xìng shénme?  
A: Wǒ xìng Dīng, wǒde míngzi jiào Dīng Yī.  
Wǒ shì xuéshēng.

English Translation

(A—Ding Yi, B—Wang Er, C—Zhang San)  
A: Hello, what is your honorable surname?  
B: My surname is Wang. I am called Wang Er.  
I am a teacher. What is your last name?  
A: My last name is Ding and my full name is  
Ding Yi. I am a student.



老师	老師	lǎoshī	n.	teacher
和		hé	conj.	and
学生	學生	xuéshēng	n.	student
您		nín	pron.	honorific form of singular you
好		hǎo	adj.	good
你(您)好		nǐ(nín)hǎo	greeting	hello
贵	貴	guì	adj.	honorable
贵姓	貴姓	guìxìng	n./v.	honorable surname (is)
我		wǒ	pron.	I; me
姓		xìng	n./v.	last name; have the last name of ...
王		Wáng	n.	last name Wang
叫		jiào	v.	to be called
二		èr	num.	two (used when counting; here used as a name)
是		shì	v.	to be (any form of “to be”)

## 第一课 老师和学生

(A——丁一, B——王二, C——张三)

A: 您好, 您贵姓?

B: 我姓王, 叫王二。我是老师。你姓什么?

A: 我姓丁, 我的名字叫丁一。我是学生。



你		nǐ	pron.	you (singular)
什么	什麼	shénme	pron.	what
丁		Dīng	n.	last name Ding
我的		wǒde	pron.	my; mine
名字		míngzi	n.	name
一		yī	num.	one (here used as a name)



B: Tā shì shéi? Tā jiào shénme míngzi?

A: Tā shì Zhāng Sān.

\*\*\*\*\*

B: Nǐhǎo, Zhāng Sān. Wǒ shì Dīng Yī de lǎoshī.  
Nǐ yěshì xuéshēng ma?

C: Dīng Yī shì xuéshēng, wǒ yěshì xuéshēng,  
wǒmen dōushì xuéshēng.

B: Nǐ shì Zhōngguó xuéshēng háishì Měiguó  
xuéshēng?

C: Wǒ búshì Zhōngguó xuéshēng, yě búshì  
Měiguó xuéshēng. Wǒ shì Riběn rén, wǒ shì  
Riběn xuéshēng.

B: Who is he? What is his name?

A: He is Zhang San.

\*\*\*\*\*

B: (Talking to Zhang San) Hello, Zhang San. I  
am Ding Yi's teacher. Are you also a student?

C: Ding Yi is a student. I am also a student. We  
are both students.

B: Are you a Chinese student or an American  
student?

C: I am neither a Chinese student nor an Ameri-  
can student. I am Japanese. I am a Japanese  
student.

他		tā	pron.	He, him
谁	誰	shéi	pron.	who
张	張	Zhāng	n.	last name Zhang
三		sān	num.	three (here used as a name)
也		yě	adv.	also, too
吗	嗎	ma	part.	end of sentence particle to indicate a yes/no question
我们	我們	wǒmen	pron.	we, us

B：他是谁？他叫什么名字？

A：他是张三。

\*\*\*\*\*

B：你好，张三。我是丁一的老师。你也是学生吗？

C：丁一是学生，我也是学生，我们都是学生。

B：你是中国学生还是美国学生？

C：我不是中国学生，也不是美国学生。我是日本人，我是日本学生。

都		dōu	adv.	both; all
中国	中國	Zhōngguó	n.	China
还是	還是	háishì	conj.	or (used only in selective questions)
美国	美國	Měiguó	n.	United States
不		bù	adv.	(negation) no, not
日本		Rìběn	n.	Japan
人		rén	n.	person, people

## 语法 Grammar Notes

### 1. Singular Pronouns

There are three singular pronouns used for people in Lesson 1: 我 (I, me), 你 (you), and 他 (he, him). Chinese pronouns do not change forms as their English counterparts do. For example, he and him are both represented by 他. In Chinese, whether a pronoun serves as subject or object in a sentence, there is only one form.

### 2. Verb 是 (to be)

All Chinese verbs are tenseless and do not conjugate when combined with different subjects. The tenses are indicated by time words or grammatical particles in a sentence. In the case of 是 (to be), whether the subject is first person I 我, second person you 你, or third person he 他, or singular or plural, and whether the verb is in past tense, present tense, or future tense, one does not need to use varied forms as in English (am, is, are, was, were, will be, etc.). In Chinese, the verb form does not change at all.

### 3. Word Order of Sentence

The basic word order of a sentence in Chinese is the same as that in English:

**Subject + verb + object**

他是学生。

Tā shì xuéshēng.

He is a student.

### 4. Greetings

你好 or its honorific form 您好 is an equivalent to English “hello,” or “hi.” It is an all-purpose salutation. It is an exchanged greeting, so both parties say the same words. 你好吗, similar to English “How are you?,” is formulaic. The answer usually is 还好 (háihǎo, I’m okay) or 很好 (hěnhǎo, good).

### 5. Question Words: 谁 (who, whom); 什么 (what)

The word order of questions using a question word is the same as the basic sentence order for a statement, with the question word taking the same position that the answer should take in the

sentence. Thus, the word order for the question is the same as that for the answer. This is different from the word order for questions in English.

Question:	他是谁?	Tā shì shéi?	Who is he?
Answer:	他是丁一。	Tā shì Dīng Yī.	He is Ding Yi.
Question:	他姓什么?	Tā xìng shénme?	What is his surname?
Answer:	他姓丁。	Tā xìng Dīng.	He has the surname Ding.

## 6. Expression of One's Name: 姓, 贵姓, and 叫

姓 can be used as a noun (surname) and a verb (have the surname of).

贵 has several meanings, including “honorable” and “expensive.” 贵姓, literally “honorable surname,” is a polite way to ask for another’s surname and is used only in the second person.

您贵姓? Nín guìxìng? What is your honorable surname?

When answering this question, one should say simply 我姓. ...

Never say 我贵姓 ... (My honorable surname is ...).

姓 is used to express one’s surname, and 叫 (call or be called) is used to express one’s given (or first) name or full name. The following pattern is used:

**Subject 叫 X.**

Subject is called X.

他姓丁, 他叫丁一。

Tā xìng Dīng, tā jiào Dīng Yī.

He has the surname Ding and is called Ding Yi.

## 7. Minor Sentences

When the subject is understood in context, it can be omitted. Such sentences are called minor sentences. For example, in the sentence 叫丁一, the subject “he” is dropped because in this context it is very clear that this sentence shares the same subject as the previous sentence 他姓丁.

## 8. Possessive 的

**Pronoun/noun + 的**

The particle 的 is used after a pronoun or a noun to indicate ownership or possession.

我的	wǒde	my
我的老师	wǒde lǎoshī	my teacher
老师的名字	lǎoshī de míngzi	teacher’s name

A special case in which 的 can be dropped is when it occurs between a pronoun and a word for a relative or person with whom one has an intimate relationship. For example:

我(的) bàba      my father  
你(的) māma      your mother

## 9. Plural Suffix 们

The suffix 们 is added after the pronouns 我, 你, 他 and 她 tā (her), or nouns that refer to people such as 老师 and 学生 to make them plural. Note that 们 is used for the plural form only for people, not for animals or inanimate objects.

我们	wǒmen	we, us
你们	nǐmen	you
他们	tāmen	they (all male or mixture of male and female)
她们	tāmen	they (all female)
老师们	lǎoshī men	teachers
学生们	xuéshēng men	students

## 10. Chinese Nouns

Although the singular form and the plural form of a pronoun in Chinese are differentiated by the suffix 们, as seen in note 9, Chinese nouns can be either singular or plural. 学生 (student) can be “a student,” “students,” or just “student” in different contexts. One needs **NOT** change the original form of the noun, such as adding “s” or “es,” as in English, to make it plural. When a noun appears in a sentence, it can occur by itself or be preceded by a number with a measure word, a possessive pronoun, or other modifiers. Compare the following two sentences:

他是学生。      Tā shì xuéshēng.  
他是一个学生。      Tā shì yíge xuéshēng.

These two sentences are the same in English “He is a student.” But in Chinese they have slightly different connotations. 他是学生 emphasizes the identity of the subject. It is in contrast to 他是老师 (He is a teacher).

## 11. Chinese Adverbs

也 (adv.)      too, also  
都 (adv.)      both, all

In Chinese, modifiers always precede the words they modify; thus, adverbs always precede verbs and cannot move around. “I am also a student” and “I am a student, too” both are translated the same way in Chinese: 我也是学生。 Adverbs cannot stand alone; they must be combined with

a verb or an adjective, serving as a modifier. Therefore, there is no equivalent to the English phrase “Me too.” It has to be translated as 我也 + v./adj., with the specific verb or adjective added.

The adverb 都 works in the same way. It behaves differently from “both/all” grammatically. As an adverb, it must precede the main verb or adjective.

Both of us are students. 我们都是学生。 Wǒmen dōushì xuéshēng.

All of us are students. 我们都是学生。

“Both” and “all” are translated into 都 in these examples.

## 12. Particle 吗

The particle 吗 at the end of a sentence changes a statement into a yes/no question. There are other ways of asking a yes/no question, which will be discussed in future lessons. One usually answers a yes/no question by giving a detailed confirmation or negation in a complete sentence. The brief “yes” 是 or “no” 不是 are often omitted. For example:

Question	Answer
你是学生吗？ Nǐshì xuéshēng ma? Are you a student?	(是, ) 我是学生。 Shì, wǒ shì xuéshēng. Yes, I am a student.
	(不是, ) 我不是学生。 Búshì, wǒ búshì xuéshēng. No, I am not a student.

## 13. A还是B (A or B)

还是 is used in a selective question to connect the two alternatives. A/B can be words, phrases, or clauses. In English, “or” can appear in a statement and in a selective question, for example, “You can go today or tomorrow” and “Do you go today or tomorrow?” However, the two functions of “or” are translated into two different words in Chinese. 还是 is used only in the choice type question. The other word that is the equivalent to “or” in a statement will be introduced later.

### ► 你是中国学生还是美国学生？

Nǐ shì Zhōngguó xuéshēng háishì Měiguó xuéshēng?

Are you a Chinese student or an American student?

### 你姓张还是姓丁？

Nǐ xìng Zhāng háishì xìng Dīng?

Is your last name Zhang or Ding?

## Cultural Notes

### Chinese Names

Chinese names, especially the names of the Han Chinese, usually have two parts: last name (surname) and first name (given name), as seen in the three names that appear in Lesson 1: Ding Yi, Wang Er, and Zhang San. Ding, Wang, and Zhang are the surnames and Yi, Er, and San are the first names. As you might have noticed, Chinese people place the surname in the initial or first position and the given name second, which is opposite to the Western custom.

According to recent national census data, there are over 10,000 surnames in Mainland China. Half of them are simple surnames with only one character, such as Ding, Wang, and Zhang. The other half are complex surnames with two or three characters, such as Sīmǎ 司马, Gōngsūn 公孙, and Yùchí 尉迟. Most complex surnames originated from minority groups. The top ten surnames that are used by the largest number of people are Lǐ 李, Wáng 王, Zhāng 张, Liú 刘, Chén 陈, Yáng 杨, Zhào 赵, Huáng 黄, Zhōu 周, and Wú 吴. Chinese surnames have different origins from ancient times. Some originated from clan names or place names; some were borrowed from the animal totem of the clan; some were borrowed from the name of the home country, official title, or rank of nobility of one's ancestor; and some were borrowed from professions.

Characters used in given names are usually auspicious ones or those with positive meanings. Given names usually carry special connotations. They can be imbued with the hopes or wishes that parents have for their children, or reflect the characteristics of the time when the child was born. For example, many of the generation who were born in the early 1950s were given the names “jiànguó” 建国 (to build the country) or “jiàn huá” 建华 (to build China). Nowadays people are very creative in generating names, and the government has had to promulgate laws to regulate the selection and use of names for official registration.

You probably will not find an actual person in China who has the name Ding Yi, Wang Er, or Zhang San. These are highly symbolic names created to facilitate your study, making your first contact with Chinese characters and Chinese names less intimidating.

Chart of the one hundred Chinese surnames.

李 1	王 2	张 3	刘 4	陈 5	杨 6	赵 7	黄 8	周 9	吴 10
徐 11	孙 12	胡 13	朱 14	高 15	林 16	何 17	郭 18	马 19	罗 20
梁 21	宋 22	郑 23	谢 24	韩 25	唐 26	冯 27	于 28	董 29	萧 30
程 31	曹 32	袁 33	邓 34	许 35	傅 36	沈 37	曾 38	彭 39	吕 40
苏 41	卢 42	蒋 43	蔡 44	贾 45	丁 46	魏 47	薛 48	叶 49	阎 50
余 51	潘 52	杜 53	戴 54	夏 55	钟 56	汪 57	田 58	任 59	姜 60
范 61	方 62	石 63	姚 64	谭 65	廖 66	邹 67	熊 68	金 69	陆 70
郝 71	孔 72	白 73	崔 74	康 75	毛 76	邱 77	秦 78	江 79	史 80
顾 81	侯 82	邵 83	孟 84	龙 85	万 86	段 87	章 88	钱 89	汤 90
尹 91	黎 92	易 93	常 94	武 95	乔 96	贺 97	赖 98	龚 99	文 100

Answer the following questions.

1. Do you have a Chinese name? 你的中国名字是什么?
2. Find out what your teachers' and your classmates' Chinese names are.
3. Identify the surnames that we have learned in this lesson, i.e. 张, 王, 丁, and your surname in the above chart.



## Traditional Character Text

### 老師和學生

(A——丁一, B——王二, C——張三)

A: 您好, 您貴姓?

B: 我姓王, 叫王二。我是老師。你姓什麼?

A: 我姓丁, 我的名字叫丁一。我是學生。

B: 他是誰? 他叫什麼名字?

A: 他是張三。














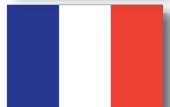

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B: 你好, 張三, 我是丁一的老師。你也是學生嗎?

C: 丁一是學生, 我也是學生, 我們都是學生。

B: 你是中國學生還是美國學生?

C: 我不是中國學生, 也不是美國學生。我是日本人, 我是日本學生。

	Zhōngguó 中国 China		Měiguó 美国 U.S.A.		Déguó 德国 Germany
	Yìndù 印度 India		Yīngguó 英国 U.K.		Yìdàlì 意大利 Italy
	Xībānyá 西班牙 Spain		Jiā'nádà 加拿大 Canada		É'guó 俄国 Russia
	Rìběn 日本 Japan		Hánguó 韩国 Korea		Mòxīgē 墨西哥 Mexico
	Yuènnán 越南 Vietnam		Fǎguó 法国 France		Aòdàliyà 澳 大利亚 Australia

# 2

## Shū Zài Zhuōzi Shang (The Books Are on the Table)



### Pinyin Text

(A—Dīng Yī, B—Zhāng Sān)

A: Zhè shì shénme?

B: Zhè shì yì zhī bǐ.

A: Nà shì shénme?

B: Nà shì liǎngběn shū.

A: Shū zài nǎr?

B: Shū zài zhuōzi shang.

A: Shūshang yǒu méiyǒu bǐ?

B: Shūshang méiyǒu bǐ. Bǐ zài shū de xiàtōu.

A: Shū de xiàtōu yǒu jǐ zhī bǐ?

B: Shū de xiàtōu yǒu sān zhī bǐ hé yìzhāng  
báizhǐ.

### English Translation

(A—Ding Yi, B—Zhang San)

A: What is this?

B: This is a pen.

A: What are those?

B: Those are two books.

A: Where are the books?

B: The books are on the table.

A: Is there a pen on top of the books?

B: There is no pen on top of the books. The pens  
are under the books.

A: How many pens are under the books?

B: There are three pens and a piece of white  
paper under the books.



书	書	shū	n.	book
在		zài	prep.	at, in, on
桌子		zhuōzi	n.	desk, table
上		shàng	prep.	on top of
这	這	zhè	pron.	this; these
支		zhī	m.w.	measure word for pens
笔	筆	bǐ	n.	pen
那		nà	pron.	that; those
两	兩	liǎng	num.	two (used in combination with measure words and nouns, e.g., 两本书 ; not used for counting numbers)
本		běn	m.w.	measure word for books/notebooks
哪儿	哪兒	nǎr	q.w.	where

## 第二课 书在桌子上

(A——丁一, B——张三)

A: 这是什么?

B: 这是一支笔。

A: 那是什么?

B: 那是两本书。

A: 书在哪儿?

B: 书在桌子上。

A: 书上有没有笔?

B: 书上没有笔, 笔在书的下头。

A: 书的下头有几支笔?

B: 书的下头有三支笔和一张白纸。



有		yǒu	v.	there is/are
没有		méiyǒu	v.	there is/are not; to have not
下头	下頭	xiàtóu		prep. under
几	幾	jǐ	q.w.	how many
张	張	zhāng	m.w.	measure word for flat things, such as paper, card, bed, table, picture
白		bái	adj.	white
纸	紙	zhǐ	n.	paper

A: Báizhǐ shang yǒu zì ma?

B: Báizhǐ shang yǒu hēizì.

A: Shì shénme zì?

B: Shì Zhōngguó zì.

A: Báizhǐ shang yǒu jǐge zì?

B: Yī, èr, sān, sì, wǔ, liù, qī, bā, jiǔ, shí, shíyī,  
shí'èr, shí'èr ge zì.

A: Zhuōzi pángbiānr shì shénme?

B: Zhuōzi pángbiānr shì yì bǎ yǐzi.

A: Yǐzi shang shì shénme dōngxī?

B: Shì yí ge hànǎobǎo.

A: Nèige hànǎobǎo shì shéde?

B: Nèige hànǎobǎo búshì nǐde, yě búshì wǒde,  
shì lǎoshī de.

A: Are there any characters on the white paper?

B: There are black characters on the white paper.

A: What kind of characters?

B: Chinese characters.

A: How many characters are on the white paper?

B: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight,  
nine, ten, eleven, twelve. Twelve characters.

A: What is beside the table?

B: It is a chair beside the table.

A: What kind of thing is on the chair?

B: It is a hamburger.

A: Whose hamburger is that?

B: That hamburger is not yours, and not mine  
either. It is the teacher's.

字	zì	n.	character
黑	hēi	adj.	black