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Phrasebook

# Chinese



天气预报说明天有台风。  
*The weather forecast says  
tomorrow there will be a typhoon.*

祝大家一路平安!  
*Have a safe trip!*

**Includes: 21 language lessons**

# *Chinese*

**YE Lan**

Adapted for English speakers  
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This phrasebook doesn't claim to be a substitute for a language course, but if you devote a bit of time to reading it and learning a few useful phrases, you'll quickly find that you're able to participate in basic exchanges with Chinese speakers, enriching your travel experience.

**A word of advice: don't aim for perfection! Those you're speaking to will forgive any mistakes and appreciate your efforts to communicate in their language. The main thing is to leave your inhibitions behind and speak!**

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# Getting started

## ➤ Day 1

听 **Tīng**  
Listen

- 1 Wǒ tīng.**  
*waw teen<sup>9</sup>*  
*I listen.*
- 2 Wǒ zài tīng yīnyuè.**  
*waw dsɿ teen<sup>9</sup> yeen-yueh*  
*I in-the-act-of listen music*  
*I am listening to music.*
- 3 Nǐ yào tīng yīnyuè ma?**  
*nee yao teen<sup>9</sup> yeen-yueh mah*  
*you (informal) want listen music [?]*  
*Do you want to listen to music?*

Here are the sentences written in Chinese characters:

**1** 我听。 **2** 我在听音乐。 **3** 你要听音乐吗？

### Notes

Pinyin is a useful pronunciation aid once you get used to it. The marks over the vowels that look like accents in fact indicate which tone to use (see the pronunciation guide on the front cover flap). Here are some tips for the words in this lesson:

- in **ng**, the **g** is barely pronounced: [*teen<sup>9</sup>*].
- the **z** is pronounced [*ds*] as in *nods*.
- **i** is (usually!) pronounced [*ee*].
- **o** is pronounced [*aw*] as in *office*.
- the diphthong **ai** resembles the long ‘i’ sound of the English *I*.
- **u** is usually [*oo*], but after a **y** it is more like the letter [*u*]. Imagine saying [*ee*] with your lips pursed, a little like the sound in *few*.

Good news: Chinese verbs don't change to indicate tense or person so there are no conjugations to learn. Nor are there articles (*a/an* or *the*). This simplifies things! However, it uses grammatical particles (words that have a grammatical function, but no meaning on their own) and word order is very important. For example, **ma** is a question particle that is used at the end of a sentence to indicate a yes/no question.


There are different ways to say *you* in Chinese: **nǐ** is more informal and is used in most circumstances, whereas **nín** is used to show respect when addressing older people. The plural form **nǐmen** is used when speaking to more than one person.

**Practice—Translate the following sentences:**

1. **Nǐ zài tīng yīnyuè ma?** 你在听音乐吗?
2. **Zài tīng, nǐ yào tīng ma?** 在听, 你要听吗?
3. **Yào tīng.** 要听。

**Answers:**

1. Are you listening to music?
2. Yes, I am (*Am listening*)—do you want to listen?
3. Yes (*Want listen*).

 This ancient symbol has been simplified to 乐, losing its drums at the top. Its meaning is still the same though, and refers to both *pleasure* and *music*.

# Conversing

## ➤ First contact

If you're stuck, you can simply point to the characters in this phrasebook that express what you want to say. Chinese speakers are used to tracing or showing written characters if they have a problem making themselves understood.

## Greetings

In China, shaking hands is not customary, except in business situations. People simply greet one another verbally. When saying hello to someone, generally the informal **nǐ** *you* is used, but if someone is older than you, it is best to use the more formal **nín**. If saying hello to a group, use **nǐmen**.

Hello. (inf. sing.)	你好	<b>Nǐ hǎo.</b>	<i>nee hao</i>
Hello. (form. sing.)	您好	<b>Nín hǎo.</b>	<i>neen hao</i>
Hello. (plural)	你们好	<b>Nǐmen hǎo.</b>	<i>nee-muhn hao</i>
How are you?	你好吗	<b>Nǐ hǎo ma?</b>	<i>nee hao mah</i>
Very well.	很好	<b>Hěn hǎo.</b>	<i>huhn hao</i>
Fine.	还好	<b>Hái hǎo.</b>	<i>hi hao</i>
Thank you.	谢谢	<b>Xièxie.</b>	<i>shyeh-shyeh</i>

If you don't know someone very well, it would be considered lacking in manners to give a response such as **Bù hǎo**. [*boo hao*] *Not good*.

## Addressing someone politely

As a general rule, it is polite to address someone by their full name, for example: **Sòng** (family name) **Lǐlíng** (given name). Note that the family name comes first in Chinese! Addressing

someone by only their given name is reserved for close friends and family. The professional title comes after the family name: **Mǎ dàifu** *Dr Ma (dàifu physician)*.

Mr Song	宋先生	<b>Sòng xiānsheng</b>	son <sup>9</sup> shyen-shuhn <sup>9</sup>
Mr Song's wife	宋夫人	<b>Sòng fūren</b>	son <sup>9</sup> foo-ren
Mrs Wang	王太太	<b>Wáng tàitai</b>	wahn <sup>9</sup> tí-tí
Miss Li	李小姐	<b>Lǐ xiǎojie</b>	lee shyao-jyeh

Hello, Song Liming!  
**Sòng Límíng, nǐ hǎo!**

Director Ma!  
**Mǎ jīnglǐ!**

Hello, Mr Li.  
**Lǐ xiānsheng, nín hǎo.**

Mrs Li, how are you?  
**Lǐ fūren hǎo ma?**

Hello, Mrs Song and Miss Ma.  
**Sòng tàitai, Mǎ xiǎojie, nǐmen hǎo.**

Any transmission of knowledge or expertise is preceded with the greeting **Tóngxuémén hǎo**. [ton<sup>9</sup>-shueh-muhn hao] *Hello, learners*. The standard reply is **Lǎoshī hǎo**. [lao-shuh hao] *Hello, teacher*.

## Saying goodbye

When a guest is ready to leave, the host says **Wǒ sòng nǐ**. *I'll accompany you*. At the door, they will bid you farewell with **Màn zǒu!** [mah<sup>9</sup> dsoh] *Walk slowly!*, meaning 'take care when you walk'.

Goodbye.	再见	<b>Zài jiàn.</b>	dsí jyen
See you tomorrow.	明天见	<b>Míngtiān jiàn.</b>	meen <sup>9</sup> -tyen jyen
See you later.	回头见	<b>Huí tóu jiàn.</b>	hway toh jyen
I have to go.	我先走了	<b>Wǒ xiān zǒu le.</b>	wo shyen dsoh luh

See you next Wednesday.  
**Xià xīngqīsān jiàn.**  
*shyah sheen<sup>9</sup>-chee-sahn jyen*  
(next week-three see)

Come back soon!  
**Huānyíng zài lái!**  
*hwahn-yeen<sup>9</sup> dsí lí*  
(welcome again come)

## On arrival

In spoken Chinese, there is usually no distinction between talking about a man or a woman: for example, the pronoun **tā** can mean *he* or *she*.

*I'm looking for Dr Li – Li Zhenming.*  
**Wǒ zhǎo Lǐ dàifu, Lǐ Zhēnmíng dàifu.**  
*waw jao lee dí-foo lee juhn-meen<sup>9</sup> dí-foo*

*Is he/she in?*  
**Tā zài ma?**  
*tah dsí mah*

*Have they arrived?*  
**Tāmen dào le ma?**  
*tah-muhn dao luh mah*

<i>I'm looking for...</i>	我找	<b>Wǒ zhǎo...</b>	<i>waw jao</i>
<i>a friend.</i>	一个朋友	<b>yí ge péngyou.</b>	<i>yee guh puhn<sup>9</sup>-yoh</i>
<i>a colleague.</i>	一位同事	<b>yí wèi tóngshì.</b>	<i>yee way ton<sup>9</sup>-shuh</i>
<i>some tourists.</i>	游客	<b>yóukè.</b>	<i>yoh-kuh</i>

On arrival, most foreign visitors are greeted by a guide, a chauffeur from the hotel, a colleague, company employee, etc.

*I am looking for our tour guide.*  
**Wǒ zài zhǎo wǒmen de dǎoyóu.**  
*waw dsí jao waw-muhn duh dao-yoh*  
(I in-the-act-of search our [possession] guide-tour)

Are you Mr Li?

**Nín shì Lǐ xiānsheng ma?**

neen shuh lee shyen-shuhn<sup>9</sup> mah  
(you are Li mister [?])

That's me!

**Wǒ jiù shì!**

waw jeeo shuh  
(I exactly be)

I'm here to pick you up.

**Wǒ lái jiē nín.**

waw ll jyeh neen  
(I come welcome you)

Welcome, Ms Martin!

**Mǎdīng tàitai, huānyíng!**

mah-deen<sup>9</sup> tí-tí hwahn-yeen<sup>9</sup>  
(Martin Mrs welcome)

Thank you, the trip went very smoothly.

**Xièxie, yí lù shang hěn shùnli.**

shyeh-shyeh yee loo shahn<sup>9</sup> huhn shoon-lee  
(thanks one way over very smooth)

I'll take you to ...	我帶您去	Wǒ dài nín qù...	waw dl neen chu
the association.	协会	xiéhuì.	shyeh-hway
the company.	公司	gōngsī.	gon <sup>9</sup> -suh
the hotel.	饭店	fàndiàn.	fan-dyen
the office.	办事处	bànshìchù.	bahn-shuh-choo
the school.	学校	xuéxiào.	shueh-shyao
the university.	大学	dàxué.	dah-shueh

**Offering wishes**

Good luck.	祝你好运	Zhù nǐ hǎo yùn.	joo nee hao yun
Best wishes.	祝福	Zhù fú.	joo foo