

Lesson 1 Mandarin Pinyin

Characters and Words

Chinese is a monosyllable language. That means each character consists of only one syllable. Each word is represented by one or more characters the shape of a square.

Initials and Finals

There are thousands of characters in Chinese. To master the standard spoken language (Mandarin) though, you only need to know 21 initials, 36 finals, and five tones.

Initials

The first 11 initials are pretty easy. They sound like they do in English.

b p m f d t n l g k h

These next three are not very difficult, but they don't sound like they do in English.

j q x
(letter G) (ch) (~sh~)

These four are called "tongue roll sounds" because you need to roll your tongue to pronounce them. Curve the sides of your tongue until they touch the roof of your mouth, and move the tip of your tongue to make the sounds.

zh ch sh r
(dr) (tr) (shr) (r)

These three are called "teeth sounds". Put your tongue against your upper front teeth like when you pronounce the sound "ts".

Z C S
(ds) (ts) (s)

Finals

I'll introduce all the finals together here. They are:

a ai ao an ang

o ong ou

e ei en eng er

i ia iao ie iu ian iang in ing iong

u ua uo ui uai uan un uang ueng

ü üe üan ün

Tones

Now comes the dreaded "tones". There are 5 tones, the neutral tone is similar to the first tone but lighter, it has no mark on it. The other four tones are marked with these symbols.

— / \ \

The following pinyin demonstrate how they are used.

bā bá bǎ bà ba

Putting It All Together

We will now put it all together to pronounce Chinese characters. We will show you a sample of pinyins. To practice all the sounds with pinyin, please go to "Tools - Pinyin" on the website.

Practice

bo pin mu fei dui tao nan leng gai kou hong

Initials	Tones
b p m f d t n l g k h	—
Finals	/
a ai ao an ang	✓
o ong ou	✓
e ei en eng er	✓
i ia iao ie iu ian iang in ing iong	✓
u ua uo ui uai uan un uang ueng	✓
ü üe üan ün	✓