

# Mandarin Chinese Pronunciation

Spoken Mandarin is a Romanized symbol called **Pīn Yīn**, which is pronounced like *peen-yeen* and means literally "spell-sound." The writing of Pinyin is similar to English alphabet and it is widely used in Mainland China to teach elementary school students how to pronounce their native tongue. For example:

How do you pronounce this in Chinese:

你好, 很高兴见到您。(hello, glad to meet you)

In Pinyin, it is pronounced as:

**nǐ hǎo , jiàn dào nǐ hěn gāo xìng.**

In speech, Chinese words are created using just 23 beginning sounds called initials, and 32 ending sounds called finals. Initials and finals, of course, combine to create the basic sounds of Chinese. For example,

**bei jing** (北京)

- **bei**: **b** is an initial, and **ei** is a final.
- **jing**: **j** is an initial, and **ing** is a final.

Initials Table

Initials (23)									
	b	p	m	f	d	t	n	l	
	g	k	h	j	q	x			
	zh	ch	sh	r	z	c	s		
y	w								

  

Finals (35)										
	a	ai	ao	an	ang					
	o	ou	ong							
	e	ei	en	eng	er					
	i	ia	iao	ian	iang	ie	iu	in	ing	iong
	u	ua	uai	uan	uang	ui	uo	un		
Ü	Üan	Üe	Ün							

Chinese is a tonal language. It is important to pronounce at the correct tones. If you use the wrong tones, your listeners may not be able to understand you.

Tone	Mark	Description of pronunciation
1st	<b>mā</b>	High and level.
2nd	<b>má</b>	Starts medium in tone, then rises to the top.
3rd	<b>mǎ</b>	Starts low, dips to the bottom, then rises toward the top.
4th	<b>mà</b>	Starts at the top, then falls sharp and strong to the bottom.
neutral	<b>ma</b>	Flat, with no emphasis.

**Notes:**

1. The four tone markings used in Pinyin were borrowed from the Yale system
2. The Wade-Giles system places a 1, 2, 3, or 4 after each syllable to indicate its tone.

