

声调 Shēngdiào

Tones

LESSON

03

What are the TONES?

Mandarin Chinese is a tonal language. When a syllable is pronounced in different tones, it gives different meaning. In Chinese language, there are 5 basic tones. Each tone has a distinctive pitch contour which can be graphed using the Chinese 5-level system. It can be represented by the tone marks as under:

- (a) First tone (—)
- (b) Second tone (/)
- (c) Third tone (∨)
- (d) Fourth tone (\)
- (e) Neutral tone; it is represented by not having any tone mark.

Learn the Tones with M



Tone position

In Pīnyīn, Tones should be marked on a vowel. If a syllable has more than one vowel, the tone should be marked on the main vowel of the syllable. Vowels are listed in the following order: a, o, e, i, u and ü. As the vowel 'a' appears first in this list, the tone in the word 'liao' should be marked on the vowel 'a'.



4+1 Tones and and pitch contour

First Tone (—)

The first tone is high pitch flat tone. It is important to keep one's voice even (almost monotone) across the whole syllable while pronouncing the first tone. It is represented by a straight horizontal line (—) above a vowel in final.

Try practicing the following first tone syllables:

mā	yī	lē	hōu
bō	kōng	nāo	yū

Second Tone (↗)

The second tone is the tone in which the pitch rises moderately. The second tone is represented by putting a rising diagonal line (↗) above the vowel in final.

Try practicing the following second tone syllables:

má	yí	lé	hóu
bó	kóng	náo	yú

Third Tone (∨)

The third tone falls and then rises again. When pronounced clearly, it's tonal “dipping” is very distinctive. It is represented by a curved “dipping” line (∨) above a vowel in final.

Try practicing the following third tone syllables:

mǎ	yǐ	lě	hǒu
bǒ	kǒng	nǎo	yǔ

Fourth Tone (↘)

The fourth tone starts out high but drops sharply to the bottom of the tonal range. It is represented by a dropping diagonal line (↘) above a vowel in final.

Try practicing the following fourth tone syllables:

mà	yì	lè	hòu
bò	kòng	nào	yù

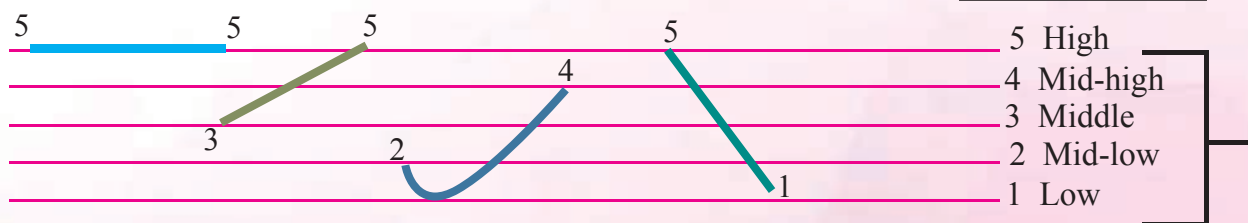
Neutral Tone

In standard Chinese pronunciation, there are many syllables that lose their original tones. The neutral tone is pronounced soft and short without regard to pitch. Syllables with a neutral tone have no tone mark.

Try practicing the following neutral tone syllables:

ma	yi	le	hou	bo	kong	nao	yu
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Tonal Representation



Why TONES are important in Chinese Language?

Different tones have different meaning



mā
(mother)



má
(flax)



mǎ
(horse)



mà
(to scold)



wēn
(warm)



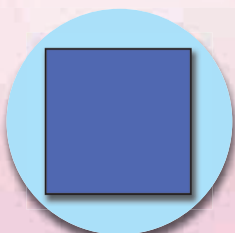
wén
(smell)



wěn
(messy)



wèn
(to ask)



fāng
(square)



fáng
(house)



fǎng
(pay a visit)



fàng
(put down)



qī
(seven)



qí
(to ride)



qǐ
(get up)



qì
(angry)

Read the monosyllabic word with proper tone

—	mā pāi	dā duō	lī huān	gē yū	bāo wā	fēi yīn
/	má pái	dá duó	lí huán	gé yú	báo wá	fēi yín
∨	mǎ pǎi	dǎ duǒ	lǐ huǎn	gě yǔ	bǎo wǎ	fěi yǐn
\	mà pài	dà duò	lì huàn	gè yù	bào wà	fèi yìn

Tone rules

1. Tone mark is placed above final (vowel) sound.
2. When a syllable contains 2 or more vowels, the tone mark should be placed above the main vowel. It means the vowel which is pronounced more clearly and loudly. For example – zǎo'ān, zài jiàn
3. When a tone mark is placed above the vowel i, the dot above i should be omitted. e.g. - lì
4. When iu or ui is used, the tone mark should be placed above the end vowel. e.g. - liù, duì
5. When there are two and three tones in a row, the first one becomes second tone. This rule is always followed, automatically, even though it will not be reflected in the pīnyīn.

See the following examples:

Originally	After applying the rule
你好 (nǐ + hǎo)	你好 (nǐ hǎo)
很好 (hěn + hǎo)	很好 (hěn hǎo)

Tone Rule : 不 bù

When the word 不 (bù) precedes a fourth tone, 不 changes to second tone (bú). This rule is always followed, automatically, and it will be reflected in the pīnyīn.

See the following examples:

Originally After applying the rule

不对 (bù + duì)	不对 (búduì)
不去 (bù + qù)	不去 (búqù)
不错 (bù + cuò)	不错 (búcuò)

Tone Rule— (yī):

The character 一 (yī), meaning “one,” is pronounced in the first tone when comes as a independent syllable. It is pronounced in second tone when followed by a fourth tone. And it becomes fourth tone when followed by any other tone.

See the following examples:

Originally After applying the rule

一个 (yī + gè)	一个 (yígè)
一半 (yī + bàn)	一半 (yíbàn)



Pronunciation Exercise – Read aloud to understand the phonetics better:

Consonants	Mandarin Example
b	bēi = glass, bái = white, bǐ = pencil, bàba = father
p	péngyou = friend, piào = ticket
m	māma = mother, měi = beautiful
f	fēng = wind, fàn = food
d	dà = big, dōu = all, duō = many
t	Tā = he/she/it, tài = too/very
n	nǐ = you, nián = year, nàr = there, nǎ = which
l	lái = come, lǎo = old, là = hot/spicy
g	gāo = tall, gē = song, gěi = give
k	kǎ = card, kàn = look, kǎo = examine
h	hē = drink, hé = and, huān = happy
j	jiǔ = nine, jiā = home / family
q	qǐng = please, qù = to go, qī = seven
x	xièxie = thank you, xué = study, xiǎo = small
z	zài - at/on, zuò = to do, zuò = to sit, zǒu = walk
c	cài = dish, cān = meal, cuò = wrong / mistake
s	sān = three, sè = colour, suì = age/year
zh	zhōng = middle, zhōngguó = China, zhù = to stay/live
ch	chī = to eat, chá = tea, chǎo = stir fry/ cook
sh	shí = ten, shì = to be (am/is/are)
r	rì = sun / day, rè = hot, rén = person
y	yún = cloud, yuán = Chinese currency, yuán = garden
w	wǒ = I, wài = outside / foreign, wǎn = bowl

练习 Liànxí :

Practice four tones.

māng	máng	mǎng	màng
wō	wó	wǒ	wò
nān	nán	nǎn	nàn
tōng	tóng	tǒng	tòng
hēn	hén	hěn	hèn

Practice sound discrimination.

pén	péng	kuài	guài
děng	dǒng	duō	tuō
láng	léng	fěn	fěng
kuā	guā	tàn	táng
gēn	gēng	huì	kui



Chinese Cuisine

Chinese cooking is an important part of Chinese Culture, also known as Chinese food culture and it has an important impact on East Asian Region. The art of Chinese cooking has been developed and refined over many centuries.

Chinese people pay great attention to courtesy, the food culture is deep rooted in China's history. The primary eating utensils are chopsticks and ceramic spoon. In a Chinese meal, everyone will have their own rice bowl; however, the accompanying dishes are shared communally. Dishes are served in the middle of a table.

Below is the list of some of the famous Chinese cuisine.

- 火锅 (Huǒguō) Hot pot
- 面条 (Miàn tiáo) Noodles
- 酸菜鱼 (Suāncàiyú) Fish with Sichuan pickles
- 炒青菜 (Chǎoqīngcài) Stir-fried vegetables
- 麻婆豆腐 (Mápó dòufǔ) Stir-fried tofu
- 宫保鸡丁 (Gōngbǎo jīdīng) Kung Pao chicken
- 鱼香肉丝 (Yúxiāng ròusī) Shredded pork with garlic sauce
- 烤鸭 (Kǎoyā) Roasted duck
- 番茄蛋花汤 (Fānqié dàn huā tāng) Tomato and egg soup
- 饺子 (Jiǎozi) Dumpling

