

A Somewhat Simplified Pronunciation Guide to Mandarin Chinese:

Each Chinese character is a syllable, and has its own meaning. In modern Chinese, words may consist of more than one syllable. Each syllable consists of a initial + final combination, but not all initials and finals go together (see attached list).

Pinyin Yale Wade-Giles Pronunciation

Finals:

easy:	a			<u>f</u> ather
	o	ou		<u>o</u> we
	e		o	done (after y like yet)
	in			<u>m</u> achine
	ing			<u>s</u> ing
	ar			<u>c</u> ar
	er			<u>h</u> er
	ai			<u>a</u> isle
	ei			<u>e</u> ight
	ao	au		<u>h</u> ow
	ou			<u>l</u> ow
	an			<u>J</u> ohn
	en	an		<u>u</u> nder
	ang			<u>s</u> ong
	eng			<u>l</u> ung
	ong	ung	ung	<u>h</u> unger
	u			<u>s</u> uper
	i	i		<u>b</u> e (after b,p,m,d,t,n,l,j,q,x,y)
	i	e		ins <u>u</u> re (after z,c,s,zh,ch,sh,r)
	ü	yu		like the German or French

compound:

ia	ya		y + a
iao	yao		y + ao
ie	ye		y + e
iou	you		y + ou
ian	yan	ien	y + an
iang	yang	iang	y + ang
iong	yung	iung	y + ong
ua	wa		w + a
ui,uei	wei	wei	w + ei
uo	wo		<u>w</u> hoa
uai	wai		w + ai
uan	wan		<u>j</u> uan
uen	wen		w + en
uang	wang	wang	w + ang
ueng	weng		w + eng
üe	yue		ü + <u>h</u> ay
üan	yuan		ü + an
ün	yun		ü + n

Chinese Pronunciation, continued:

Pinyin Yale Wade-Giles Pronunciation

Initials:

easy:	b		p	spun
	p		p'	pun
	m		m	<u>month</u>
	f		f	<u>fun</u>
	d		t	<u>stung</u>
	t		t'	<u>tongue</u>
	n		n	<u>none</u>
	l		l	<u>lung</u>
	g		k	goop
	k		k'	<u>cool!</u>
	h		h	<u>hot!</u>
hard:	z	dz	ts	<u>it's</u> over
	c	ts	ts'	<u>it's</u> cider
	s	s	s	<u>sight</u>
	zh	j	ch	<u>jerk</u>
	ch	ch	ch	<u>churn</u>
	sh	sh	sh	<u>sure</u>
	r	r	j	jacque (some dialects: <u>ralph</u>)
	j	jy	k	jeep
	q	chy	ch'	<u>cheep</u>
	x	sy	hs,s	<u>sheep</u>

false initials:

y	<u>yet</u>
w	<u>weigh</u>

The language of China (*Zhongguo*, the middle country) is difficult for many English speakers to understand. First, each syllable can be pronounced with one of four tones, and each tone may have a dozen or more meanings. Second, the subtlety of sounds we do not distinguish makes a big difference. Find a native speaker of a good Mandarin dialect and get him/her to pronounce the following word pairs: *xue/shui*, *xiang/shang*, *jiang/zhang*, *jian/zhen*, *cai/zai/sai*, *xiao/shao*, *ri/zhi*, and tongue twisters any Chinese would know. Third, every village seems to have its own dialect. People in Shanghai can't understand people in Suzhou, less than an hour away by train. In Shanghai they have their own language, and when they do speak proper Mandarin, they pronounce *cha* as *ca*, *zhang* as *zang*, *shi* as *si*, et cetera, which can be quite confusing.

Finally, there are many different languages. The *Han* Chinese spoken languages, which share the same written language (*Hanzi*), are numerous (the most common two are Mandarin and Cantonese, and they are as different as German and Spanish). What we call Mandarin (Mainlanders call it *Hanyü*, *Zhongwen*, or *putonghua*, common speech; Taiwanese call it *guoyü*, meaning national language) is the official language, but even in Beijing the common people speak an unintelligible version filled with r sounds. In the People's Republic of China, there is also Manchurian, Mongolian, and Tibetan, each with their own script; the Turkic languages, in arabic script, of the Northwest; and dozens of languages of the various minor nationalities.

Area/Province:

North China:

Beijing Municipality [Peking]
 Tianjin Municipality [Tientsin]
 Hebei [Hopeh (inc. Jehol/Chihli)]
 Henan [Honan]
 Shanxi [Shansi]
 Shandong [Shantung]

Manchuria:

Liaoning [Liaoning]
 Jilin [Kirin]
 Heilongjiang [Heilungkiang]

Lower Yangtze:

Shanghai Municipality
 Jiangsu [Kiangsu]
 Anhui [Anhwei]

Southeast Coast:

Zhejiang [Chekiang]
 Fujian [Fukien]
 Taiwan

Middle Yangtze:

Jiangxi [Kiangsi]
 Hubei [Hupeh]
 Hunan

Lingnan:

Guangdong [Kwangtung]
 Guangxi [Kwangsi] Autonomous Region
 (Zhuang Nationality)
 Hainan Island

Upper Yangtze:

Sichuan [Szechwan]

Yun-Kwei:

Guizhou [Kweichow]
 Yunnan

Tibetan Plateau:

Tibet (Xizang Autonomous Region)
 Qinghai [Ch'inghai]

Northwest China:

Shaanxi [Shensi]
 Neimonggu Autonomous Region (Inner Mongolia, inc. [Suiyuan, Chahar])
 Gansu [Kansu]
 Ningxia Autonomous Region (Hui Nationality) [Ningsia]
 Xinjiang Autonomous Region (Uighur Nationality) [Sinkiang]

Other Cities:

Guangzhou [Canton]
 Xian [Sian]
 Chongqing [Chungking]
 Qingdao [Tsingtao]
 Wuhan [Woochang/Hankow/Hanyang]
 Hangzhou [Hangchow]
 Suzhou [Soochow]
 Fuzhou [Foochow]
 Nanjing [Nanking]
 Kweilin [Guilin]
 Dalian [Dairen]
 Taibei [Taipei]
 Xiang Gang [Hong Kong]
 Aomen [Macao]

Rivers:

Changjiang (Yangtze River)
 Huanghe (Yellow River)
 Zhujiang (Pearl River)
 Heilongjiang (Black Dragon/Amur River)
 also Huaihe, Weihe

