

INTRODUCTORY
UNIT

“You’ll pick it up fast”

一学就会

Yì xué jiù huì

Introduction to Chinese



In this Introduction, you will:

- practice the four tones of Mandarin Chinese as you learn the numbers 1–10.
- learn about tonal shifts (sandhi) and the special case of y- (the number one).
- become familiar with the pronunciation of Chinese and the pinyin system of spelling Chinese syllables.
- practice linking pinyin spelling with the sounds of Chinese by working with two poems from the Tang Dynasty.
- learn about numbers and radicals.
- learn about traditional and simplified characters.

For additional materials to support this unit, go to the *Encounters* website at www.EncountersChinese.com.cn.



You have already met some of the characters in *Encounters* in the Introduction on pages xix-xx. Watch the Introductory Episode of the dramatic series to find out more about who these characters are and where they live. You will get to know them well as you continue through units 1~10.

Now, let's learn about the Chinese language.

Encounter 1 Tones and numbers



0.1 Watch the animation about the four tones on the video.



0.2 Listen to these numbers and circle the ones you hear.

0 = líng 1 = y~ 2 = èr 3 = s`n 4 = sì 5 = w^
6 = liù 7 = q~ 8 = b` 9 = ji^ 10 = shí

The numbers 1, 3, 7, and 8 are pronounced in the FIRST of the four full tones of Mandarin, as in the "Help!" of the animation. This is the high, level tone, as when you are not sure and say "Ummm" in a high pitch. Can you hum the first tone?



0.3 Listen to these numbers and circle the ones you hear.

0 = líng 1 = y~ 2 = èr 3 = s`n 4 = sì 5 = w^
6 = liù 7 = q~ 8 = b` 9 = ji^ 10 = shí

The numbers 0 and 10 are pronounced in the SECOND of the four full tones of Mandarin, as in the "What?" of the animation. This is the rising tone, like the rising pitch of an English question, such as "Yes?" Can you hum the second tone?



0.4 Listen to these numbers and circle the ones you hear.

0 = líng 1 = y~ 2 = èr 3 = s`n 4 = sì 5 = w^
6 = liù 7 = q~ 8 = b` 9 = ji^ 10 = shí

The numbers 5 and 9 are pronounced in the THIRD of the four full tones of Mandarin, as in the "Kay" of the animation. This is the dipping tone, like the first syllable of "uh-huh." Can you hum the third tone?



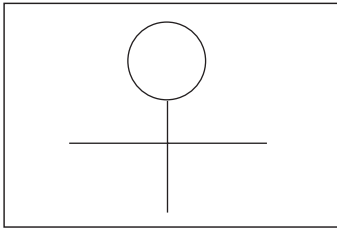
0.5 Listen to these numbers and circle the ones you hear.

0 = líng 1 = y~ 2 = èr 3 = s`n 4 = sì 5 = w^
6 = liù 7 = q~ 8 = b` 9 = ji^ 10 = shí

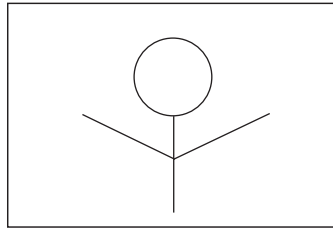
The numbers 2, 4, and 6 are pronounced in the FOURTH of the four full tones of Mandarin, as in "Fine!" of the animation. This is the falling tone, like the emphatic pitch on "Yes!" Can you hum the fourth tone?



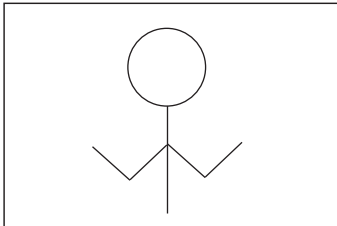
0.6 Listen to these numbers and make the appropriate arm motions based on the tone.



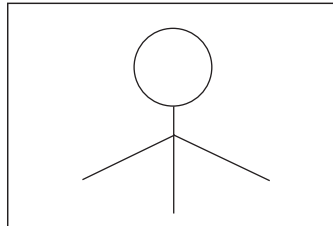
First tone:
Arms straight out to the side, level



Second tone:
Arms raised at 45° angle



Third tone:
Arms crooked at elbows in a “V”



Fourth tone:
Arms lowered at 45° angle

0.7 Draw the appropriate tone marks (for example: , á, , or à) over each of the boldfaced letters. Note that the tone mark is always placed above a vowel, never above a consonant.

ling yi **er** san si wu liu qi **ba** jiu shi
shi jiu **ba** qi liu wu si san **er** yi ling
wu qi jiu san yi **ba** liu si **er** ling shi
san qi ling si yi wu shi liu **er** **ba** jiu

FYI 供你参考

The neutral tone

Besides the four full tones, there's yet another—the neutral tone—so called because it is said lightly, without stress, and is much shorter in length than any of the four full tones. It has no tone mark. Some words that have only a grammatical function routinely have a neutral tone, as do many suffixes. In some (though not all) two-syllable words, the second syllable has a neutral tone. When characters serve as a particle or measure word, they take a neutral tone. These types of characters will be introduced later in this book.



FYI 供你参考

Tonal shifts (sandhi) on yī (the number one)

In connected speech, tones are rarely given their full value. Tones in juxtaposition can influence each other and change their value. This is called sandhi. A few words regularly change their tone in certain environments. An example is yī (the number one).

- It stays first tone when it stands alone, as during counting.
- It becomes second tone when followed by a fourth tone: yī + bàn ⇒ yí bàn (half).
- It becomes fourth tone when followed by a first, second, or third tone: yī + tiān ⇒ yì tiān (a day); yī + nián ⇒ yì nián (a year); yī + miǎo ⇒ yì miǎo (a second).
- In the middle of a phrase, yī is usually neutral: xiǎng yi xiǎng (think a moment). As we go on, we will see examples of this and other tonal shifts.

More on numbers



0.8 Write the telephone numbers below as you hear them.

- Buckingham Palace, London: _____
- Opera House, Sydney: _____
- Louvre Museum, Paris: _____
- “Bird’s Nest” Stadium, Beijing: _____
- Taj Mahal, Agra: _____
- White House, Washington, D.C.: _____

0.9 Write your own telephone number, including area code, in pinyin with tone marks.

FYI 供你参考

Pinyin

Pinyin is a system of spelling out the sounds of Mandarin Chinese using the letters of the English alphabet, along with the unlauded ü. It is an aid to accurate pronunciation used by Chinese and foreigners alike. Developed in China in the 1950s, pinyin is now used all over the world. Although not developed specifically for speakers of English, it is a fairly easy system to learn. Always keep in mind, however, that the sounds of the language must be mastered through the ear, not the eye.



0.10 Pair work: Watch and listen to the video segment. Practice “finger-counting” yourself. Then work with a partner. One person calls out a number randomly from 1 through 10, and the other makes the corresponding hand signal. Then reverse: One person makes a hand signal and the other person calls out the corresponding number.



Encounter 2 Chinese syllables

All Chinese syllables are composed of three parts.

The initial consonant: There are 21 initial consonants in Chinese (plus *y* and *w*). They are called initials because, unlike consonants in English, they appear only at the beginning of a syllable. Note that syllables in pinyin can begin with one or two consonants, but each letter or consonant combination represents only one sound.

The final vowel: Each syllable ends with a vowel, or with a final *n* or *ng*. Note that two vowels can be combined to form one sound (diphthong).

The tone: As you have already learned, there are four full tones in Mandarin, plus a neutral tone.

FYI 供你参考

About Chinese sounds

Chinese has the ability to express meaning with as much vividness and clarity as any other language, but it does so with a fairly limited stock of approximately 400 unique sounds or, more precisely, syllables. When you studied English, one of your first tasks was to learn the alphabet. This knowledge helped form the basis of a useful supply of sounds and words. In studying Chinese, you will need to learn the syllables of Chinese. The foundation of all Chinese words is its set of single-syllable sounds, the 400 or so monosyllables. Thus Chinese is often thought of as a monosyllabic language, in part because each Chinese character is a single syllable. However, Chinese words are most commonly constructed with two syllables. In fact, more than 80 percent of Chinese words are composed of at least two syllables. Three- and four-syllable words exist but are far less common.

The following charts present the vowels and consonants of Chinese. Note that all the sounds in the charts are one syllable, not two. Remember: Derive the sounds from what you hear, not from what you see. Keep in mind that the pinyin alphabet is only a memory aid, a device to help learners recall the actual sound. Chinese children use pinyin in their textbooks more or less as you are going to do. Listen carefully to the sounds of Chinese syllables and refer to these charts often, especially in the beginning weeks of study. Acquiring decent pronunciation is one of your most important tasks.

The initial consonants + *y* and *w*



0.11 Look at the chart on page 6. Listen to the initial consonants, in boldface, which are combined with a final vowel (not in boldface) in order to make them pronounceable. Pronounce the hint as you would in English. The first hint (awe) provides a guide to the pronunciation of the Chinese final vowel *o*. Note that all the sounds in this chart are pronounced in the first tone, just the way Chinese children practice them in school. In fact, Chinese children often commit the chart to memory.



The Initial Consonants				Hint
bo	po	mo	fo	(awe) > bwaw > pwaw > mwaw > fwaw
de	te	ne	le	(uh) > duh > tuh > nuh > luh
ge	ke	he		(uh) > guh > kuh > huh
ji	qi	xi		(ee) > jee > chee > syee
zi	ci	si		(zz) > dz > tsz > sz
zhi	chi	shi	ri	(rr) > jr > chr > shr > rrr

There are two additional letters — *y* and *w*—used in pinyin when none of the above consonants begin a word.

w (pronounced /w/ as in English “win” and “war”). Chinese example: **wei** (way), **wu** (woo)

y (pronounced /y/ as in English “yes” and “you”). Chinese examples: **ying** (rhymes with “sing”), **you** (rhymes with “low”)

The final vowels + *n* and *ng*



0.12 Listen to the final vowels, in boldface below, which are here combined with selected initial consonants. Note that the final vowels can be either a single vowel or a combination of vowels, sometimes with *n* or *ng*.

	+a	+e	+i	+o	+u	+n	+ng
a (ba)			bai	bao		ban	bang
e (ne)			nei			nen	neng
i (ji)	jia	jie			jiu	jín	jíng
i + a (jia)			jiao		jian	jiang	
							jiong
o					dou		dong
u (zhu)	zhuā		zhuī	zhuo		zhun	
u + a (zhuā)			zhuai			zhuan	zhuang
ü (ju)		jue lüe				jun	
						juan	



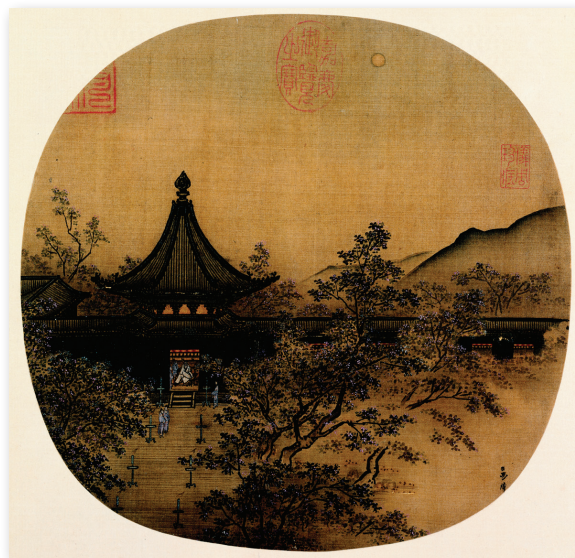
Encounter 3 Poems from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE)

In normal speech, speakers of Chinese (as of any other language) tend to run words together and slur their pronunciation (often because others can understand them anyway, and they wish to save time and effort). In common conversations, a beginning learner usually cannot tell which tones specific words have. In Tang poetry, however, tones are highly valued. When reciting poetry, native speakers tend to enunciate each syllable; tones and rhymes serve to accentuate the beauty of the lyricism. The following exercises introduce you to two of the best known of the Tang poems for the foreign learner: *Jìng yè sī* 静夜思 “Thoughts on a Quiet Night,” by poet *Lǐ Bái* (also pronounced *Lǐ Bó*) 李白 (701–762 CE), and *Dēng Guànniǔlóu* 登鹤雀楼 “Climbing Stork Tower,” by *Wáng Zhīhuàn* 王之涣 (668–742 CE). By working through these poems, you will begin to get a sense for the sounds of Chinese and how pinyin represents these sounds. If you feel up to it, go ahead and memorize one or both of the poems. When you recite a poem, you will delight many a native speaker of Chinese!

“Thoughts on a Quiet Night”



0.13 Watch and listen to Chinese school children reciting “Thoughts on a Quiet Night.” As you listen, write the correct tone marks over each of the syllables below.



“Waiting for Guests by Lamplight,” Taipei Palace Museum in Taiwan

- (Line 1) Chuang qian ming yue guang.
- (Line 2) Yi shi di shang shuang.
- (Line 3) Ju tou wang ming yue.
- (Line 4) Di tou si gu xiang.

Now complete the following note about Tang poetry.

This example is typical of one kind of Tang poem. It is made up of _____ lines, including _____ characters in each line, for a total of _____ characters. Lines _____, _____, and _____ rhyme, and each of the rhyming words in this poem is in the _____ tone.





0.14 Listen again. Don't look at the previous exercise. Write the initial consonant for each of the characters in the poem.

(Line 1) ____uáng ____ián ____íng ____uè ____u`ng.

(Line 2) ____í ____ì ____ì ____àng ____u`ng.

(Line 3) ____^ ____óu ____àng ____íng ____uè.

(Line 4) ____~ ____óu ____~ ____ù ____i`ng.



0.15 Listen again. We've flipped the next exercise upside down, so you're not tempted to peek. Write the appropriate letter in each of the blanks.

(Line 4) D- tó- s- gù- x-`-____.
 (Line 3) J- tó- wà- mǐ- y-è.
 (Line 2) Yí shì dì shà- sh-`-____.
 (Line 1) Ch-à- q-à- mǐ- y-è g-`-____.



0.16 Listen again. The following passage is a word-by-word English translation of the poem. For the fun of it, write the tone of the Chinese word above each corresponding English word.

(Line 1) Bed front bright moon brilliant.

(Line 2) Suspect be ground upon frost.

(Line 3) Lift head gaze bright moon.

(Line 4) Lower head think ancestral home.



0.17 Listen again. The following passage is a translation into more natural (but not lyrical) English. Below each English line, write out a transcription in pinyin (complete with tones!) of that line.

(Line 1) Before my bed, the moonlight is bright.

(Line 2) I take it for frost on the ground.

(Line 3) Lifting my head, I gaze at the bright moon.

(Line 4) Lowering my head, I think of my old home.



0.18 Listen again. The following is the poem in traditional Chinese characters. Circle the word for “moon” as you come across it.

床前明月光，
疑是地上霜。
举头望明月，
低头思故乡。



0.19 Listen for the last time. The following is the poem in simplified Chinese characters. Circle each character whose simplified form is different from the traditional.

床前明月光，
疑是地上霜。
举头望明月，
低头思故乡。

0.20 How many characters did you circle in the previous exercise? Answer: _____.
What percentage of the characters used in this text have been simplified?
Answer: _____ percent.

This percentage roughly holds true for many texts you will encounter as you study Chinese (but not for very short ones, like signs). The issue of traditional vs. simplified characters (along with their history) will be further explored and explained in Unit 1.

“Climbing Stork Tower”



0.21 Now watch and listen to a recitation of the poem “Climbing Stork Tower” by the poet Wáng Zh-huàn. As you listen, write the correct tone marks over each of the syllables below.

(Line 1) Bai ri yi shan jin.

(Line 2) Huang He ru hai liu.

(Line 3) Yu qiong qian li mu,

(Line 4) Geng shang yi ceng lou.

Now complete the following note:

This poem, like the previous one, is made up of _____ lines, including _____ characters in each line, for a total of _____ characters. Lines _____ and _____ rhyme, and each of the rhyming words in this poem is in the _____ tone.



0.22 Listen again. The following passage is a word-by-word English translation of the poem. For the fun of it, write the tone of the Chinese word above each corresponding English word.

(Line 1) White sun lean mountain end.

(Line 2) Yellow River enter sea flow.

(Line 3) Wish exhaust thousand mile gaze.

(Line 4) More ascend one story floor.



0.23 Listen again. The following passage is a translation into more natural (but not lyrical) English. Below each line, write out a transcription in pinyin (complete with tones!) of that line.

(Line 1) The white sun sets in the mountains.

(Line 2) The Yellow River flows to the seas.

(Line 3) To gaze another thousand miles.

(Line 4) Climb up to yet another story.



0.24 Listen again. The following is the poem in simplified Chinese characters. Circle the words for “sun,” “mountain,” and “one” as you come across them.

白日依山尽，
黄河入海流。
欲穷千里目，
更上一层楼。



0.25 Listen for the last time. The following is the poem in traditional Chinese characters. Circle each character whose traditional form is different from the simplified.

白日依山盡，
黃河入海流。
欲窮千里目，
更上一層樓。

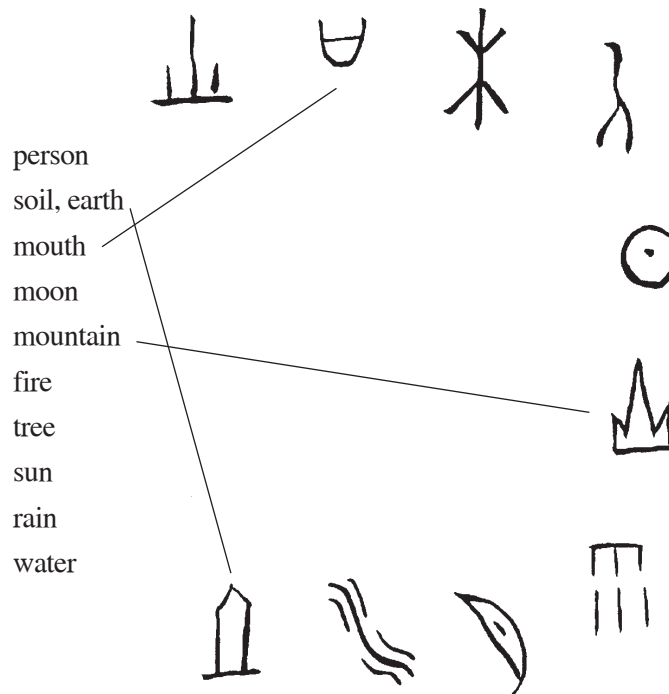


0.26 How many characters did you circle in the previous exercise? Answer: _____.
What percentage of the characters used in this text have been simplified? Answer:
_____ percent. Compare your answer here with the one you obtained for exercise 0.21.

You are now ready to memorize one or more of the poems, if you'd like. Memorization is an important part of the Chinese educational system, and is generally mandatory for students in school.

Encounter 4 Introduction to Chinese characters

0.27 The earliest records of Chinese characters on oracle bone inscriptions include versions that are more pictographic than modern Chinese characters. Match these "pictographic" characters with their English equivalents.



0.28 Now, based on the matches you made in the previous exercise, can you figure out what these modern characters mean?

火 口 木 人 日 山 土 水 月 雨



0.29 Label each character in the previous exercise with one of the following identifications.

rén (human, person) t^ (soil, earth) shuǐ (water) yǎ (rain) mù (tree, wood)
shān (mountain) kǒu (mouth) rì (sun) huǒ (fire) yuè (moon)

Recognizing radicals

In addition to standing on their own, the ten characters above also serve as radicals, or “meaning components,” of many other Chinese characters. Radicals can be thought of as building blocks that provide a broad link to the meaning of multicomponent characters. Notice how the first character below means “mountain range” and its radical component is, naturally, “mountain.” Radicals can serve you well as memory aids; there are around 200 of them, but you should concentrate on learning the 50 most common ones.

0.30 Circle the radicals you recognize in the characters below.

岭	旦	云	吹	峰
mountain range	dawn, day	clouds	to blow	peak, summit
映	雪	吞	峡	晚
shine, to reflect	snow	to swallow	canyon, gorge	evening, night
雷	喝	朔	地	址
thunder	to drink	new moon	earth, land	site, location
林	胧	坟	枯	松
forest	rising moon	grave, tomb	withered	pine tree

0.31 Some radicals can be somewhat altered when combined with another character component. Match the full forms on the left with the combination form on the right.

火	亻
人	灬
水	氵



0.32 Circle the radicals in the following characters.

灯

lantern, light

焦

scorch

热

hot

仙

an immortal

溅

splash, splatter

波

wave, ripple

佣

a servant

你

you

0.33 Try to identify the radicals in the following characters.

楚

吻

坤

晶

位

侣

崩

岳

有

森

唱

栋

洋

炒

暗

海

块

吃

露

烟

基

侨

需

崎

期

梧

溪

朗

煮

只

Recognizing numbers

0.34 Read the following characters aloud.

〇 0

一 1

二 2

三 3

四 4

五 5

六 6

七 7

八 8

九 9

十 10

0.35 Write the Arabic numerals for each of the following telephone numbers.

八〇八•九五六•二六九二

九一六•二二九•〇三七〇

七一八•九六六•六一五五

五一二•三〇二•二四〇〇

0.36 The Chinese character 元 (yuán) is the primary denomination in Chinese currency, equivalent in usage (but not in value) to a “dollar” in U.S. currency. What is the cost indicated by the following price tags?

十元 _____

六元 _____

九元 _____



Reading real-life texts

0.37 This is a sign for an establishment in Beijing called “The Vulcan Bar.” Label each of the three large characters on the sign with one of the following: person, mountain, fire.

What do you think a “mountain of fire” means? Write the English term: _____



0.38 This is a sign for a famous spicy Sichuan dish. The character 煮 (zhǔ) means “boiled.” Circle the radical for this character on the sign.



What does the radical mean? _____

What is the main ingredient of this dish? _____

In what has this ingredient been boiled? _____

Suggest a good English name for this dish: _____

0.39 This is a sign in a college cafeteria. 区 / 區 (qū) means “area.”



How much does each dish in this area cost? Write the English: _____



Unit Rap

Go to the **Encounters** website at www.EncountersChinese.com.cn and listen to the song to review the numbers introduced in this unit. Listen again and sing along!

Encounter 5 Writing

Learning to write characters

0.40 For stroke order and other useful information about each of the following characters from this unit, go to the Character Writing Workbook. Practice writing them until you can reproduce them on demand.

一, 二, 三, 四, 五, 六, 七, 八, 九, 十

火, 口, 木, 人, 山, 水

0.41 Write your telephone number (including area code) in Chinese characters.



Cultural Bits 文化点滴



What is culture?

View the video segment "What is culture?" and then discuss the following questions with your classmates.

- Give a few examples of ways in which cultural understanding is crucial for certain bits of language, such as the expression *Ch- le ma*?
- What is the difference between "large C" culture and "small c" culture? Give some examples of each.
- What images do you associate with Chinese culture?
- What are the four major inventions that China is known for?
- What are some elements that can contribute to culture shock, and how can they be avoided?



Recap

Vocabulary

Numbers

líng zero
yī one
èr two

sān three
sì four
wǔ five

liù six
qī seven
bā eight

jiǔ nine
shí ten

Checklist of “can do” statements

After completing this unit, you should be able to perform each of the following tasks:

Structure of Chinese

- ☐ Make an accurate statement in English describing Chinese tones.
- ☐ At least some of the time, identify the tone of a Chinese syllable by indicating a number (if done orally) or a tone mark (if written).
- ☐ At least some of the time, identify the initial sound of a Chinese syllable by selecting the corresponding pinyin letter(s).
- ☐ At least some of the time, identify the final sound of a Chinese syllable by selecting the corresponding pinyin letter(s).

Listening and speaking

- ☐ Recognize and say the numbers 1~10 in various orders.

Reading and writing

- ☐ Recognize and write the characters for the numbers 1~10.
- ☐ Recognize ten common characters that are also radicals and write six of them.
- ☐ Identify ten common radicals in characters.
- ☐ Recognize the Chinese character for *yuán*.