

PINYIN CHART

The Complete Guide to Chinese Sounds | Standard Mandarin (Putonghua) Pronunciation | connectmandarin.com

THE 5 TONES

1st Tone

mā

High and flat, like sustaining a note

2nd Tone

má

Rises sharply, like asking "what?"

3rd Tone

mǎ

Dips down, then curves back up

4th Tone

mà

Falls sharply, like a firm command

Neutral

ma

Short and light, no strong pitch

INITIALS - 23 STARTING SOUNDS

Initial	Sound	Example	Note
b	bo	包 bāo (bun)	Unaspirated, softer than English b
p	po	苹果 píngguǒ (apple)	Strong puff of air
m	mo	妈妈 māma (mom)	Same as English m
f	fo	飞机 fēijī (airplane)	Same as English f
d	de	蛋糕 dàngāo (cake)	Unaspirated d
t	te	兔子 tùzi (rabbit)	Strong puff of air
n	ne	牛奶 niúniǎi (milk)	Same as English n
l	le	老虎 lǎohǔ (tiger)	Same as English l
g	ge	狗 gǒu (dog)	Softer than English g
k	ke	可乐 kělè (cola)	Strong puff of air
h	he	河马 héma (hippo)	Raspy, back of throat
j	ji	鸡蛋 jīdàn (egg)	Tongue flat, lips spread
q	qi	汽车 qìchē (car)	Like ch, tongue tip down
x	xi	西瓜 xīguā (watermelon)	Soft sh, common trouble spot
zh	zhi	猪 zhū (pig)	Retroflex, tongue curled back
ch	chi	长颈鹿 chángjǐnglù (giraffe)	Retroflex + aspirated
sh	shi	狮子 shīzi (lion)	Retroflex sh
r	ri	热狗 règǒu (hot dog)	Buzzy, no English match
z	zi	枣 zǎo (jujube)	Like ds in kids
c	ci	草莓 cǎoméi (strawberry)	Like ts, strong air
s	si	三明治 sānmíngzhì (sandwich)	Same as English s
y	yi	鱼 yú (fish)	Same as English y
w	wu	乌龟 wūguī (turtle)	Same as English w

FINALS - 24 VOWEL SOUNDS

Final	Example	Note
a	阿姨 āyí (auntie)	Open ah, as in father
o	哦 ó (oh)	Rounded aw sound
e	鹅 é (goose)	Uh, from back of throat
i	衣服 yīfu (clothes)	Ee, as in see
u	五 wǔ (five)	Oo, as in moon
ü	鱼 yú (fish)	Lips round, say ee
ai	爱 ài (love)	Like eye
ei	黑 hēi (black)	Like ay in say
ui	灰色 huīsè (grey)	Quick way sound
ao	猫 māo (cat)	Like ow in cow
ou	狗 gǒu (dog)	Like oh in go
iu	六 liù (six)	Like yo, quickly
ie	姐姐 jiějie (older sister)	Like yeh
üe	月亮 yuèliang (moon)	ü blended into eh
er	耳朵 ěrduo (ear)	R-colored, tongue curls
an	伞 sǎn (umbrella)	Ahn, tongue behind teeth
en	门 mén (door)	Uhn, soft nasal
in	心 xīn (heart)	Een, nasal
un	云 yún (cloud)	Closer to ün after j/q/x/y
ün	裙子 qúnzi (skirt)	ü with nasal ending
ang	糖 táng (candy)	Ahng, open and nasal
eng	灯 dēng (lamp)	Uhng, further back
ing	星星 xīngxīng (star)	Eeng, nasal
ong	龙 lóng (dragon)	Oong, rounded and nasal