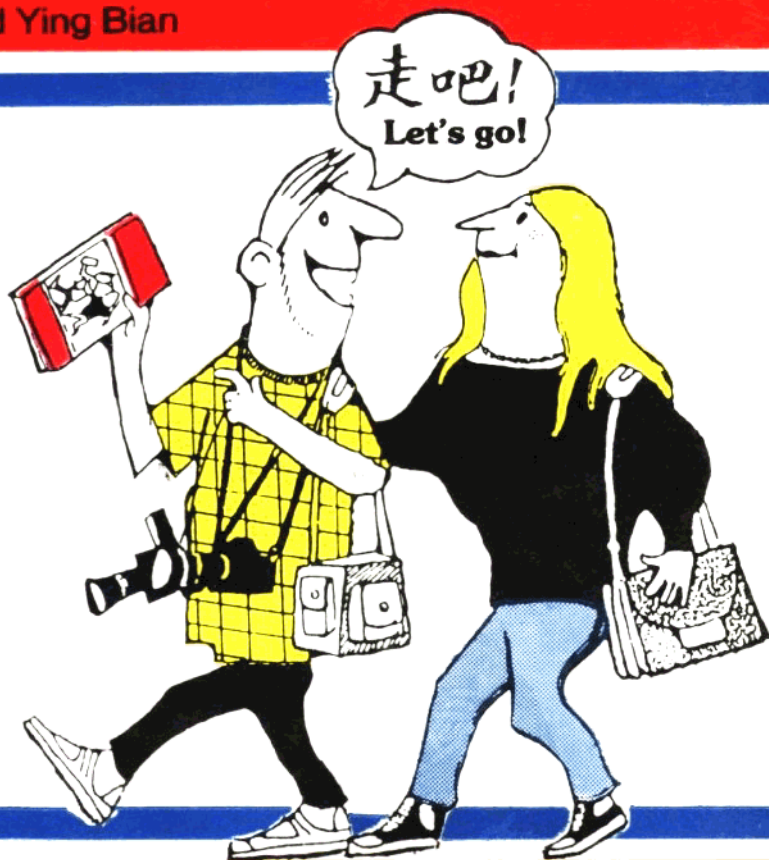


# the Pocket Interpreter

Lydia Chen  
and Ying Bian

**CHINESE**



**ESSENTIAL PHRASES...  
TIPS ON FOOD, SHOPPING, TRAVEL...  
3500-WORD ENGLISH-CHINESE  
DICTIONARY... *and more!***

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# Introduction

Going to China is a dream come true for many Westerners. In recent years, the opportunities for business, vacation, and educational trips have increased rapidly. Without some knowledge of the Chinese language, however, you will find yourself either confined to hotels and offices where English is spoken or totally dependent on the services of an interpreter. To help you have some independence while in China, *The Pocket Interpreter: Chinese* provides the sentence patterns you will most often need and the vocabulary with which you can create new sentences. In addition, each chapter includes brief information which will help you better understand the Chinese people, their society, and their culture.

The design of this book is to offer basic sentences upon which other sentences can be patterned, rather than attempt to provide specific phrases for every situation the China traveler could possibly encounter. You can use this book effectively by mastering the basic patterns, such as "...zài nǎr?" (Where is...?) and "Yǒu méi yǒu...?" (Do you have...?), and referring to the dictionary for the specific words you need to make the sentence you want. The twenty-two sentence patterns introduced in Chapter One recur often in the subsequent chapters. By recognizing the patterns each time they reappear, you will soon be able to use them on your own.

In the patterns, the words for which substitutions can be made have been bracketed in both the English and Chinese pinyin versions. Thus you will know where to replace a given word with one that is more suited to your needs. For example, if the English sentence is "Where is the (zoo)?" the

## INTRODUCTION

corresponding Chinese would be “(*Dòngwùyuán*) zài nǎr?” Seeing that *dòngwùyuán* is the equivalent of zoo, you could then look up another word in the dictionary, such as museum, and substitute its Chinese equivalent, *bówùguǎn*, in the given sentence. “Where is the museum?” would thus be “*Bówùguǎn zài nǎr?*”

The Chinese words in this book have been spelled according to the pinyin system, the official transliteration of Putonghua used in the People's Republic of China. Putonghua, also known as Mandarin, is the national dialect of China. Based on a northern dialect, similar to that of Beijing, it is used in national broadcasts and taught in public schools throughout China. When among people of their own locality, however, Chinese still speak their own local dialects, which vary greatly from region to region. In Guangzhou, for example, you will hear people around you speaking Cantonese, which bears almost no resemblance to Putonghua. Nevertheless, Putonghua is generally understood and you can use it wherever you go in China.

Since most Chinese do not read pinyin easily, the phrases here have also been given in Chinese characters, or *Hànzì*. The *Hànzì* used are the simplified characters of China, which are slightly different from the traditional characters used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other places. People who know the traditional characters can usually figure out the simplified forms by context. If you have difficulty pronouncing a Chinese word or phrase, you can point to the accompanying *Hànzì* and ask the Chinese with whom you wish to communicate to read it.

Every Chinese written character represents a one-syllable word. Many Chinese words, however, are compounds composed of two or more characters which each contribute meaning to the total concept. For example, the word for movie is *diànyǐng* (电影), composed of the words *diàn* (electric) and *yǐng* (shadow). For ease of reading, the two syllables have been spelled together as one word in pinyin; in *Hànzì* they are two separate characters.

In Putonghua, each syllable is composed of an initial

sound, a final sound, and a tone. (See charts, pp. 4-5.) The word *diàn*, for example, has the initial sound *d*, the final sound *ian*, and the downward fourth tone (ˋ). You will notice that some words in pinyin do not have tonal marks above them. This is because they are unstressed syllables which should be spoken quickly in a neutral tone.





A few words, such as *yī* (one), are not always marked with the same tone when they appear in different phrases. This is because the tone of some words depends on the tone of the word following it. *Yī*, for example, should only be spoken in the first tone when it stands alone or is followed by a pause; if the next word is a first-, second-, or third-tone word, *yī* should be read as *yí*; if the next word is a fourth-tone word, *yī* should be read as *yì*. Similarly *bù* (not) should be read as *bú* when the word following it is a fourth-tone word. For convenience, *yī* and *bù* have been marked in this book according to the tones in which they should be read within the phrase given, not as they are listed in the dictionary.

The tone, or inflection, of a Chinese word is just as important as its pronunciation. This aspect of speaking Chinese is the most difficult for English speakers to learn. In English, the tone of a word varies with the mood of the sentence; in Chinese, the tone stays the same whether the sentence is a question, exclamation, or matter-of-fact statement. Mood is indicated by stress on certain words, rather than inflection. To use the wrong tone in a Chinese word would be the equivalent of saying "cat" for "dog" in English.

The key to learning a new language is repetition. Begin by practicing a few simple phrases, such as *nǐhǎo* (hello) and *xièxie* (thank you), which you can use many times a day. Then build up to the useful phrases presented in Chapter One. To perfect your Putonghua, ask a Chinese friend to help you with your pronunciations and tones. Also, reinforce your grasp of the language by listening and looking. Be on the alert for the commonly heard phrases and often seen signs presented at the end of each chapter. With these thoughts in mind, a positive outlook, and book in hand, *Yí lù shùnfēng* (may good winds follow you)!

# Pronunciation Guide

## TONES

<b>First Tone</b>		a relatively high, level tone, as when singing the note "la"
<b>Second Tone</b>		a rising tone, as in "far" when asking, "Is it far?"
<b>Third Tone</b>		a dipping tone, as when irritably saying, "So?"
<b>Fourth Tone</b>		a downward tone, as when adamantly saying, "No!"

## INITIAL SOUNDS

**b, d, f, g, h,**

**j, k, l, m, n,**

**p, s, t, w, y**

roughly the same as in English,

**ch, sh**

as in English, but curl the tongue up toward the roof of the mouth while pronouncing the "ch" or "sh" sound

**c**

ts as in *cats*

**q**

ch as in *cheese*

**r**

zhr, like in *pleasure*

**x**

sh as in *banshee*

**z**

ds as in *cards*

**zh**

dg as in *fudge*



## FINAL SOUNDS

<b>a</b>	ah
<b>ai</b>	eye
<b>an</b>	ahn
<b>ang</b>	ahng
<b>ao</b>	ow
<b>ar</b>	are
<b>e</b>	uh
<b>ei</b>	ei <sup>gh</sup> as in a <i>sleigh</i>
<b>en</b>	un as in <i>run</i>
<b>eng</b>	ung as in <i>hung</i>
<b>er</b>	cross between ar and er
<b>i</b>	ee, but after c, ch, r, s, sh, z, and zh, it is silent
<b>ia</b>	ee-ah (quickly, as one syllable)
<b>ian</b>	ee-en (quickly)
<b>iang</b>	ee-ahng (quickly)
<b>iao</b>	ee-ow (quickly)
<b>ie</b>	ee-eh (quickly)
<b>in</b>	een as in <i>seen</i>
<b>ing</b>	ing as in <i>ring</i>
<b>iong</b>	ee-ōng (quickly)
<b>iu</b>	eo as in <i>Leo</i>
<b>o</b>	o as in or
<b>ong</b>	ōng
<b>ou</b>	oh
<b>u</b>	oo as in <i>moo</i>
<b>ü</b>	cross between oo and ew, as in French <i>tu</i>
<b>ua</b>	wa as in <i>wash</i>
<b>uai</b>	why
<b>uan</b>	wahn, as in <i>wander</i>
<b>uang</b>	wahng
<b>ue</b>	weh
<b>ui</b>	way
<b>un</b>	won
<b>uo</b>	wo as in <i>wore</i>



# yī 1 Essentials

本册重点



**How do you even begin to learn Chinese? When you arrive in China, you will find yourself suddenly the "foreigner." At first you may feel at a loss, not knowing what to say. Gradually, by learning a few essentials, you will find your new surroundings less formidable. The sentence patterns and phrases introduced here are the ones you will draw upon most often in your travels. Master these, and you'll be able to tackle China on your own.**

## **22 Sentence Patterns**

Can I (enter)?	<i>Wǒ néng bù néng (jìnqu)?</i>
Can you (help me)?	<i>Nǐ néng bù néng (bāngmáng)?</i>
Do you have (postcards)?	<i>Yǒu (míngxìnpian) ma?</i>
How much does (this) cost?	<i>(Zhèige) yào duōshao qián?</i>
I am (American).	<i>Wǒ shì (Měiguó rén).</i>
I am not (a movie star).	<i>Wǒ bú shì (diànyǐng míngxīng).</i>
I have (two pieces of luggage).	<i>Wǒ yǒu (liǎng jiàn xíngli).</i>
I do not have (a map).	<i>Wǒ méi yǒu (dìtú).</i>
I lost my (passport).	<i>Wǒde (hùzhào) diū le.</i>
I need (to see a doctor).	<i>Wǒ yào (kànbìng).</i>
I do not need (a taxi).	<i>Wǒ bú yào (chūzū qìchē).</i>
I would like to (go to the zoo).	<i>Wǒ xiǎng (qù dòngwùyuán).</i>
I would not like to (rest).	<i>Wǒ bù xiǎng (xiūxi).</i>
I will stay in (Beijing) for [three days].	<i>Wǒ yào zài (Běijīng) dāi [sān tiān].</i>
Is there a (restaurant) nearby?	<i>Fùjìn yǒu (fànguǎn) ma?</i>
Please give me (a receipt).	<i>Qǐng gěi wǒ (fāpiào).</i>
Please help me (register).	<i>Qǐng bāng wǒ (dēngjì).</i>
This is my (shoulder bag).	<i>Zhè shì wǒde (bēibāo).</i>
This is not my (camera).	<i>Zhè bú shì wǒde (zhàoxiàngjī).</i>
When does (the bank) open?	<i>(Yínháng) shénme shíhòu kāimén?</i>
Where can I find (coffee)?	<i>Nǎr yǒu (kāfēi)?</i>

## No Verb Conjugations

The easy part of learning Chinese is that there are **no** verb conjugations. I, you, he, we, and they, all take the same verb form. For example:

I am	<i>Wǒ shì</i>
You are	<i>Nǐ shì</i>
He is	<i>Tā shì</i>
We are	<i>Wǒmen shì</i>
You are (pl)	<i>Nǐmen shì</i>
They are	<i>Tāmen shì</i>

The pronouns are also easy to remember. The plural forms are the singular forms plus the syllable *men* ( 们 ).

## Where? There!

You will find that people from different regions in China prefer different words to express the same idea, and Putonghua incorporates these variations. For example, *nǎr* and *nǎli* both mean "where" and *nàr* and *nàli*, likewise, mean "there." People in the north tend to prefer the "r" sound, as in *nǎr*, whereas southerners prefer a crisper sound, as in *nǎli*.

## Negatives

The negative form of most verbs in Chinese is formed by adding the syllable *bù* ( 不 ) before the verb, almost like the word "not" in English. For example:

I know.	<i>Wǒ zhīdao.</i>
I don't know.	<i>Wǒ bù zhīdao.</i>

However, with the verb *yǒu* (to have), the negative is formed with the syllable *méi* ( 没 ).

*continued*

我能不能进去?

你能不能帮忙?

有明信片吗?

这个要多少钱?

我是美国人。

我不是电影明星。

我有两件行李。

我没有地图。

我的护照丢了。

我要看病。

我不要出租汽车。

我想去动物园。

我不想休息。

我要在北京呆三天。

附近有饭馆吗?

请给我发票。

请帮我登记。

这是我的背包。

这不是我的照相机。

银行什么时候开门?

哪儿有咖啡?

## ESSENTIALS

Where is (the post office)?      (*Yóujú*) zài nǎr?

### Self-introduction

Hello.      *Nǐhǎo.*

My name is (John Smith).      *Wǒ jiào (John Smith).*

My last name is (Smith).      *Wǒ xìng (Smith).*

We're a group of (five).      *Wǒmen gòng yǒu (wǔ) gè rén.*

We're with (XYZ Company).      *Wǒmen shì (XYZ Gōngsī) de.*

### Courtesies

May I have your last name, please?      *Nín guī xìng?*

Thank you.      *Xièxie.*

You're welcome.      *Bú kèqǐ*

Sorry.      *Duìbuqǐ.*

I'm so sorry.      *Zhēn duìbuqǐ.*

It's nothing.      *Méi guānxi.*

Excuse me (may I trouble you). . .      *Máfan nǐ...*

Excuse me (may I ask). . .      *Qǐng wèn...*

Excuse me (sorry).      *Duìbuqǐ.*

Excuse me (make way, hate to disturb you). . .      *Lǎojià...*

I'm leaving now. Bye!      *Wǒ zǒu le. Zàijiàn!*

### Key Phrases

What's this?      *Zhè shì shénme?*

Which one?      *Něige?*

This one.      *Zhèige.*

邮局在哪儿?

你好!

我叫 John Smith.

我姓 Smith.

我们共有五个人.

我们是 XYZ 公司的.

您贵姓?

谢谢.

不客气.

对不起.

真对不起.

没关系.

麻烦你…….

请问…….

对不起.

劳驾…….

我走了, 再见!

这是什么?

哪个?

这个.

He has money. *Tā yǒu qián.*

He doesn't have money. *Tā méi yǒu qián.*

## Questions

Questions are formed in Chinese by adding the syllable *ma* (吗) at the end of a statement or by inserting the negative form of a verb or modifier immediately after that verb or modifier. For example:

He is your friend.

*Tā shì nǐde péngyǒu.*

Is he your friend?

*Tā shì nǐde péngyǒu ma?*

Is he (or is he not) your friend?

*Tā shì bú shì nǐde péngyǒu?*

## Measure Words

One of the most difficult skills in Chinese is the use of measure words. Every noun has a specific measure word that is used to count or refer to it, just like "gaggle" refers to geese and "pride" refers to lions in English.

The generic measure word in Chinese is *ge* (个) which can refer to almost anything. However, use of specific measure words is more proper. The proper measure word for books, for example, is *běn* (tome or edition). Whenever books are mentioned, *běn* precedes *shū* (book):

one book *yī běn shū*

this book *zhèi běn shū*

five books *wǔ běn shū*

which book? *něi běn shū?*

For a list of common measure words, refer to Appendix B on page 205.

## ESSENTIALS

That one.

Nèige.

Right.

Duì.

Wrong.

Bù duì.

Enough.

Goù le.

Just right.

Zhèng hǎo.

How far?

Duōyuǎn?

How long (duration)?

Duōjiǔ?

How much?

Duōshao?

What time is it?

Xiànzài jīdiǎn le?

## Bridging the Gap

I don't understand.

Wǒ bù míngbái.

Please speak more slowly.

Qǐng shuō de màn yidiǎn.

Please point to it.

Qǐng zhǐ gēi wǒ kàn.

Will you please repeat that?

Qǐng chóngfù yí biàn.

Could you write it down?

Nǐ néng xiě xià lái ma?

How do you pronounce this?

Zhèige zěnmé niàn?

What does this mean?

Zhè shì shénme yìsi?

## Emergencies

Help!

Jiùmíng!

Call the police.

Kuài jiào jīngchá.

Get a doctor.

Kuài jiào yīshēng lái.

There's a fire.

Nà biān qǐ huǒ le.

There's been an accident.

Nà biān chūshì le.



那个。

对。

不对。

够了。

正好。

多远?

多久?

多少?

现在几点了?

我不明白。

请说得慢一点。

请指给我看。

请重复一遍。

你能写下来吗?

这个怎么念?

这是什么意思?

救命!

快叫警察。

快叫医生来。

那边起火了。

那边出事了。

## Past Tense

The past tense of a verb in Chinese is made by adding the syllable *le* (了) immediately after the verb or at the very end of the sentence. For example:

I'm going. *Wǒ qù.*

I went. *Wǒ qù le.*

I went shopping. *Wǒ qù mǎi dōngxi le.*

## Zheige or Zhege?

You might wonder why there is an inconsistency in the pronunciation, and pinyin spelling, of *zhè* (这), meaning "this"; *nà* (那), meaning "that"; and *nǎ* (哪), meaning "which." When the word following these indicators is a measure word, then *zhè* is often pronounced *zhèi*; *nà* is pronounced *nèi* or *nè*; and *nǎ* is pronounced *něi*. For example:

this one *zhège, zhèige*

that one *nàge, nèige, nège*

which one? *nàge? něige?*

## What You'll Hear

*bù hǎo* no good

*bù xíng* not okay; doesn't work

*děng yí děng* wait a while ✓

*hǎo* good

*kěyǐ* can be done ✓

*Méi bànfǎ.* There's no solution.

*Méi yǒu.* There isn't any. ✓

*Qǐng jìn.* Please come in.

*xíng* okay

*Wèi!* Hello. Hey!