

**STREETWISE GUIDE**

# **The Pocket Interpreter**

## **CHINESE**



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# **The Pocket Interpreter**

## **Chinese**

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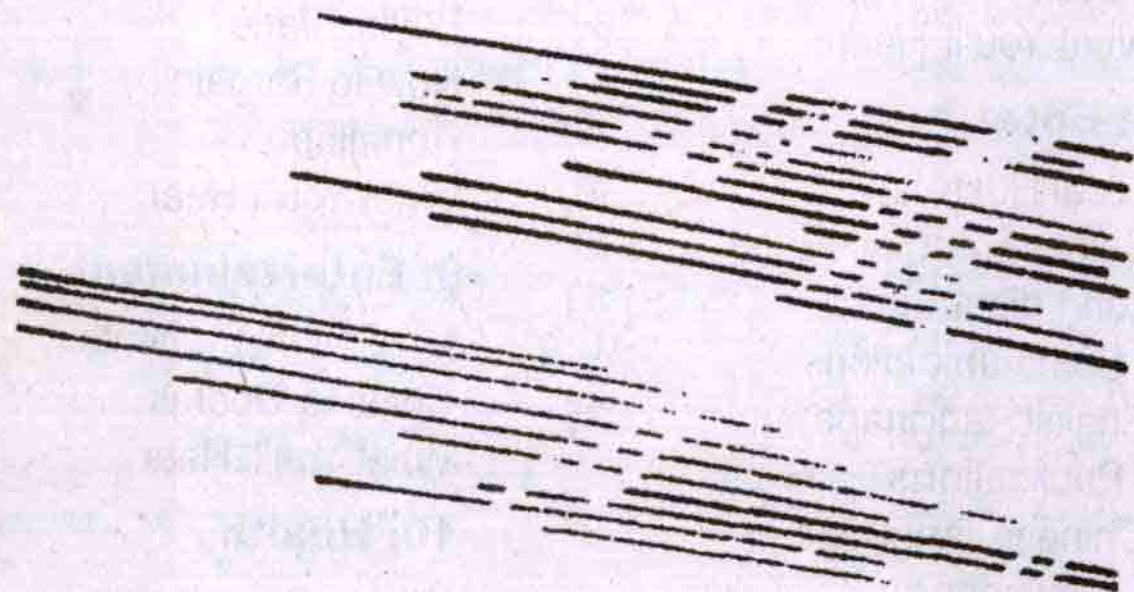
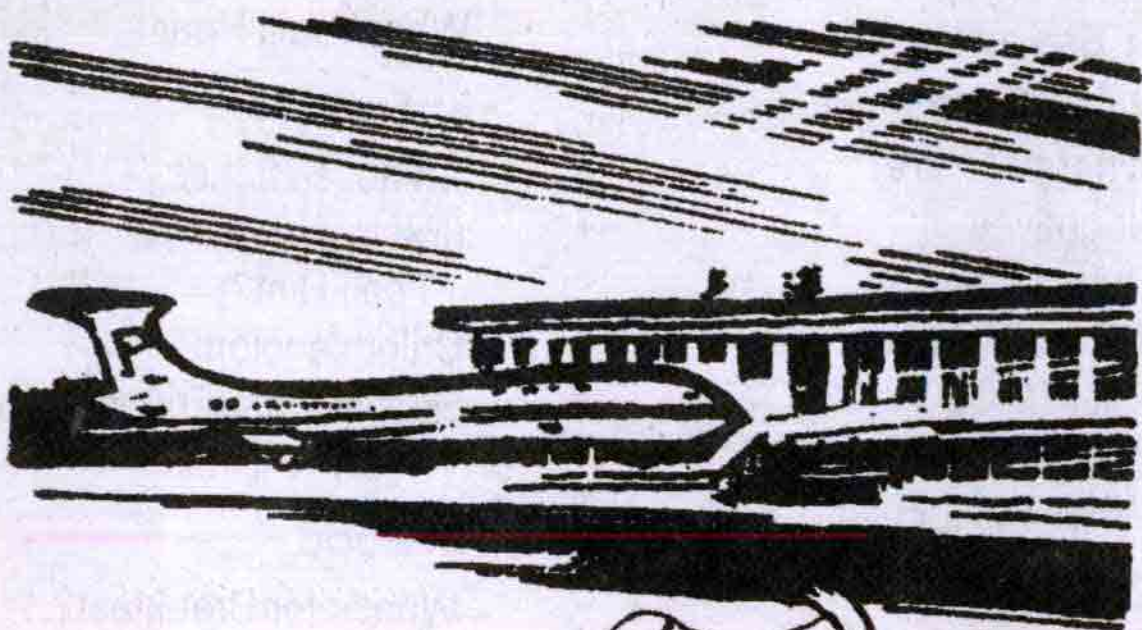
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# Introduction

Going to China is a dream come true for many Westerners. The opportunities for business, vacation, and educational trips are common. 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



## INTRODUCTION

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 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, or Modern Standard Chinese (MSC), also commonly called Mandarin, is the national language of China. Taking Beijing dialect as the basic pronunciation and based on northern dialects, 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 are also given in Chinese characters, or *Hànzì*. The *Hànzì* used are the simplified Chinese characters, 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 Pronunciation Guide*) The word *diàn*, for example, has the initial sound *d*, the final sound *ian*, and the downward fourth



## INTRODUCTION

tone (ˊ). 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 *yì*; if the next word is a fourth-tone word, *yī* should be read as *yí*. 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.



## INTRODUCTION

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, *Yílùshùnfēng* (may good winds follow you)!



# Pronunciation Guide

## TONES

**First  
Tone**



a relatively high, level tone, as when singing the note "la"

**Second  
Tone**



a rising tone, as in "far" when asking, "Is it far?"

**Third  
Tone**



a dipping tone, as when irritably saying, "So?"

**Fourth  
Tone**



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

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



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