

# Getting started with Chinese 1



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## About this free course

This free course is an adapted extract from the Open University course developed from extract parts of LXC001 - *Beginners Chinese 1: 开始吧 kāishǐ ba!* - <http://www.open.ac.uk/courses/short-courses/lxc001>.

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[Getting started with Chinese 1](#)

There you'll also be able to track your progress via your activity record, which you can use to demonstrate your learning.

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# Introduction

## Introduction

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**Figure 1**

Have you always wanted to learn how to speak Mandarin Chinese and been fascinated by the Chinese characters? Perhaps you have plans to visit the Great Wall of China, teach English in China or work for companies that have business links with Chinese-speaking countries. Or perhaps you are simply fascinated by the sound, the script and its ancient civilisation. There are so many reasons for learning Chinese, so many motivations and rewards, but sometimes it can be difficult to know where to start.

This course offers you an excellent start to achieving a basic understanding of the structure of the Chinese language and the ability to communicate in Mandarin Chinese. Starting with simple greetings and saying your name, you will progress towards understanding more complex language in a variety of different scenarios. The course includes interactive activities, explanations, exercises and tips about language learning. It is a good idea to keep notes either on paper or electronically so that you can keep track of your progress. This course also comes with a free vocabulary learning mobile app 'Chinese@OU' to help you revise. To download on iOS devices, go to the App Store,



search 'Chinese@OU' and install. To download on Android devices, go to Google Play Store, search 'Chinese@OU' and install.

Before you start, just a few words about the Chinese language. It is spoken by the Han Chinese, and hence called 汉语 *hàn yǔ* (literally Han language). The Han Chinese constitute 94 percent of China's population. Chinese is also spoken in Taiwan, Singapore and by many overseas Chinese communities in other areas of the world. Chinese is widely regarded as a group of related languages. This is because the Chinese language is divided into seven major dialects (with many sub-dialects): Cantonese, Gan, Hakka, Mandarin, Min, Wu, and Xiang. In this course, you are going to learn the official dialect, Mandarin Chinese (also known as 中文 *Zhōngwén*).

Another important thing to do before you start is to take some time to decide how you will allocate your time to your studies. Learning Chinese, like learning any language, is a gradual process; it's often described as a 'marathon, not a sprint.' Little and often is the best approach, so if at all possible, spread your 3–4 hours over the week, rather than devoting one whole afternoon or evening. This will give you plenty of opportunities to revisit vocabulary and language structures, to revise quickly what you did last time and above all, to practise and consolidate. This is the best way to learn vocabulary and perfect your pronunciation and tones.

It's also a very good idea to involve your family and friends; let them know you have decided to start learning Chinese and they can help you when you practise what you have been learning, or leave you in peace when you need to study.

After completing this course, you will be able to:

- say hello and goodbye and thank people in Mandarin Chinese
- respond to greeting and thanks
- use personal pronouns including the politeness pronoun *nín*
- count from 0 to 99
- recognise some Pinyin spelling conventions.

Now that you are fully prepared, 开始吧 *kāishǐ ba* (let's start) on Week 1.

Audio content is not available in this format.

# Open Centre for Languages and Cultures

This course has been developed from extract parts of [LXC001 - Beginners Chinese 1: 开始吧 kāishǐ ba!](#). The Open University has launched a dedicated learning centre called [The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures](#). OpenLearn is supporting this project and is providing extracted units of all courses on The Open Centre in our dedicated [Language and Cultures Hub](#).

The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures is the exciting new home for non-accredited language and intercultural communication short courses. You can study a wide range of language and language related subjects with us anywhere in the world, in any time zone, whatever your motivation – leisure, professional development or academic.

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The Open Centre for Languages and Cultures is an international leader in online language learning and intercultural communications, built on our pioneering pedagogy and research.

## What makes the Open Centre different?

- The OU is the leader in online learning and teaching with a heritage of more than 50 years helping student achieve their learning ambitions.
- The short courses are underpinned by academic rigour and designed by native speakers experienced in producing engaging materials for online learning of languages and cultures.
- The graduating nature of the courses means that learners can build up their language and skills over time.
- Learners will also gain a better understanding of the culture(s) associated with the language(s) they study enabling the development of intercultural communication skills.
- Learners can mix and match the short courses and study more than one course at a time.

Once this course is complete you will be directed to OpenLearn's hub for language content where you will be able to build on your newly found language skills.

Now that you're fully prepared, it's time to start on [Week 1](#).

开始吧 *kāishǐ ba* *Let's start!*



# Week 1: Say hello

## Introduction

---



**Figure 1**

In this week, you will learn how to say hello and goodbye in Mandarin Chinese, how to thank people and respond to thanks, and when to use the politeness pronoun *nín*. You will also be introduced to the Chinese sound system including tones, and how to pronounce some initials and finals. Whilst learning how to pronounce some syllables, you will also learn what Pinyin is and its relationship with Chinese characters. In the quiz section, you will have the opportunity to test yourself on what is covered in Week 1. Finally, in the consolidation and extension section, you will be shown how to build your own language notebook, expand your learning by practising tones as well as reflecting on your learning.



# 1 Say hello

To start this week you will look at the different expressions used to greet people.

## Expressions used for greetings

- *Nǐ hǎo* (lit. 'you good/well') is the most commonly used greeting in Mandarin Chinese which can be used throughout the day. It is equivalent to 'hello' in English.
- *Nín hǎo* (lit. 'you good/well') is a polite greeting because '*nín*' is the polite form for 'you' (singular), like the French pronoun '*vous*'. It is used to greet someone you meet for the first time, or to who is senior either in terms of age or status. It can be loosely translated as 'How do you do?'
- Not too long ago when food was in short supply, the phrase 'Have you eaten?' (*Nǐ chī le ma?*) was actually one of the common greetings amongst neighbours. An appropriate response is to say '*Chī le*' for 'Yes' or '*Méi chī*' for 'No'.
- *Zǎo ān* (lit. morning peace), a common greeting in the morning in Taiwan.

When parting from people, you say:

- *Zàijiàn* (lit. again see) Goodbye

Note that although there are expressions in Chinese for 'good morning', 'good afternoon', 'good evening' and 'good night', they are not very often used. Also, in greetings handshaking is appropriate. Chinese people do not feel comfortable being hugged or kissed in public.

## Activity 1

Listen to these different short expressions and select their English equivalents. You can listen to them as many times as you need to: just click on each one again to repeat it. You can look at the words at the same time, if that is helpful, by clicking on 'Transcript'.

Listen and then select the English equivalent from the options below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ Hello (informal)
- ☐ How do you do? (formal)
- ☐ Goodbye
- ☐ None of the above

Listen and then select the English equivalent from the options below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ Hello (informal)
- ☐ How do you do? (formal)
- ☐ Goodbye
- ☐ None of the above

Listen and then select the English equivalent from the options below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ Hello (informal)
- ☐ How do you do? (formal)
- ☐ Goodbye
- ☐ None of the above

Listen and then select the English equivalent from the options below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ Hello (informal)
- ☐ How do you do? (formal)
- ☐ Goodbye
- ☐ None of the above

## 2 Pinyin and tones

There are various systems for transcribing Mandarin Chinese into the Latin alphabet. Pinyin (e.g. *nǐ hǎo* for 'hello') was adopted as the official system in the People's Republic of China in 1958 and has since become the standard and most-used form of transcription. This course uses Pinyin in the teaching of pronunciation.

### Tones

Chinese is a tonal language. In Mandarin Chinese, there are four tones (five if you include the neutral tone). The tone marks are like this:

1st tone: ¯      2nd tone: ´      3rd tone: ˇ      4th tone: `

You can also visit the [Pronunciation Guide](#) to see a diagram of the four tones.

The tone marks are put over the following single finals: *a*, *o*, *e*, *i*, *u*, and *ü*. Some syllables (e.g. grammar particles or a repeated syllable in a word) do not carry tone marks. For example, the second syllable in 'xièxie' (thanks) is low and flat with no stress, known as 'neutral tone', hence it is without a tone mark.

Every syllable in isolation has its definite tone. A syllable consists of an initial (like consonants in English, e.g. *n*, *h*) and a final (like vowels in English, e.g. *i*, *a*, *o*). Same syllables with different tones have different meanings with different character forms. For example, *wáng* 王 with the 2nd tone means 'king' and is also a common family name, but *wàng* 忘 with the 4th tone means 'to forget'. Often, many different characters with different meanings share exactly the same pronunciation. For example, *jiàn* in *zàijiàn* (goodbye) is written 见 (to see) whilst at the same time this very sound has more than ten different meanings with different character representations (all pronounced *jiàn*): 健 (healthy), 建 (to build), 剑 (sword), etc.

Now listen to the four tones pronounced with the initial 'm' and final 'a' and repeat after each one. Reveal the transcript if you wish, whilst repeating:

Audio content is not available in this format.

Now listen to them again. This time, together with the neutral tone:

Audio content is not available in this format.

## 3 Tone changes

There are two common tone changes you need to be aware of, but please do not worry if at this stage you find them difficult to detect:

1. When two 3rd-tone syllables are together, the first syllable is usually changed to a 2nd tone. For example, the greeting *nǐ hǎo*, although transcribed with two 3rd tones, is pronounced with a 2nd tone followed by a 3rd tone: *ní hǎo* (hello). In most textbooks, this change is not reflected in writing. Click below to first listen to how *nǐ* and *hǎo* are pronounced in isolation, and then when they are together: *ní hǎo*.

Audio content is not available in this format.

2. When *bù* (no, not) is followed by another 4th tone syllable, it is changed to a 2nd tone in actual speech. For example, *bù xiè* (lit. no thanks) is pronounced *bú xiè* (not at all, you're welcome). In many textbooks, this change is reflected in writing. Click below to first listen to how *bù* and *xiè* are pronounced in isolation, and then when they are together: *bú xiè*.

Audio content is not available in this format.

### Activity 2

Now listen to the expressions you have already heard in previous activities. This time, listen carefully, paying attention to the tones. Select the option with the right tones as they are pronounced (i.e. the option that reflects the tone changes) in each expression.

**Note:** Pause after each syllable and listen to it as many times as necessary. Only reveal the transcript after you have made the choices.

Audio content is not available in this format.

#### ***nǐ hao***

Select the correct option below.

- ☐ *nǐ hǎo*
- ☐ *ní hǎo*
- ☐ *ní hāo*

#### ***xiexie***

Select the correct option below.

- ☐ *xiēxiè*
- ☐ *xièxiè*
- ☐ *xièxie*

#### ***nín hao***

Select the correct option below.

- ☐ *nǐn hào*
- ☐ *nín hǎo*
- ☐ *nīn hǎo*

**zaijian**

Select the correct option below.

- ☐ zàijiàn
- ☐ zāijiàn
- ☐ zàijiǎn

**bu xie**

Select the correct option below.

- ☐ bù xiè
- ☐ bú xiè
- ☐ bú xiè



## 4 Hello or goodbye?

Now you are more familiar with expressions for greeting and taking your leave, complete the activity below.

### Activity 3

Look at the images below and drag and drop each one next to the short exchange that matches the picture.

Then, reveal the answer.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

A: *Nín hǎo!*

B: *Nín hǎo!*

A: *Zàijiàn!*

B: *Zàijiàn!*

A: *Nǐ hǎo!*

B: *Nǐ hǎo!*

### Answer

How did you get on? If you were not sure of any of these answers, take a look at the correct matches below. You can also click on the recordings to listen to the exchanges.

1. This picture shows two businessmen shaking hands formally. The correct greeting would be '*Nín hǎo!*'.



Audio content is not available in this format.

2. This picture shows friends waving goodbye to each other, so the correct expression would be 'Zàijiàn!'.



Audio content is not available in this format.

3. This picture shows two friends shaking hands warmly to say hello, so the correct expression would be 'Nǐ hǎo!'.



Audio content is not available in this format.

## 5 Pronunciation: initials

In Mandarin Chinese, there are 23 consonant sounds and they are called 'initials' since they always appear in the initial position of a syllable.

Amongst them, *j* and *z* occur in the expression for 'goodbye' (*zàijiàn*), and *x* is in 'thanks' (*xièxie*). The initial *j* sounds like the 'j' sound in the English words, 'jeep' and 'jeans', but with the tongue nearer the teeth and the mouth relaxed. The initial *z* sounds like the 'ds' sound in the English word, 'bea**ds**'. The initial *x* sounds like the 'ch' sound in the English word 'ma**ch**ine' (when pronouncing *x*, raise the tip of your tongue near to your hard palate, then let the air rub through the channel between them). To see a full list of initials and to hear how each of them is pronounced, [click here](#).

### Activity 4

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 6 Pronunciation: single finals

Mandarin Chinese is a vowel-dominated language. In total, there are 35 vowel sounds known as 'finals' because they occur at the end of syllables. Amongst those 35, there are six single finals: *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u* and *ü* (e.g. '*i*' in *nǐ*), and the rest are 'compound finals' (e.g. *ao* in *hǎo*).

The six single finals are:

- a* as in the English word, '**are**'
- o* as in the English word, '**or**'
- e* as in the English word, '**dirty**'
- i* as in the English word, '**tea**'
- u* as in the English word, '**food**'
- ü* as in the French word, '**tu**'

### Activity 5

Listen to the six single finals, as described in the above, and type in the box below the six single finals in the order in which you hear the sounds.

Click on 'Transcript' to check your answer.

Audio content is not available in this format.

*Provide your answer...*

### Discussion

Tip: The easiest way to remember these six finals is to put them in order as in the box above: *a*, *o*, *e*, *i*, *u*, *ü* for the following reasons:

1. when pronouncing them in this order, your mouth shape will change from the biggest *a* sound to the smallest *ü* sound;
2. when putting the tone mark on syllables with compound finals, this order will indicate which vowel of the final will carry the tone mark. Normally, the tone mark will go to the higher order vowel. For example, for the syllable *hǎo*, the tone mark is on *a*, because *a* is before *o* in the order.

## 7 What would you say?

Based on what you have learnt so far in this course, have a go at the next activity.

### Activity 6

Listen to each recording: which of the three options is the most appropriate response to the expression you hear? What would you say?

Select the appropriate response to each greeting and only reveal the transcript after you finish the task.

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ *Zàijiàn*
- ☐ *Nǐ hǎo*
- ☐ *Bú xiè*

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ *Zàijiàn*
- ☐ *Nǐ hǎo*
- ☐ *Bú xiè*

Audio content is not available in this format.

- ☐ *Zàijiàn*
- ☐ *Nǐ hǎo*
- ☐ *Bú xiè*

Now, you try. Once you have checked that your answers in the activity above are correct, listen to the following three exchanges. This time say the response out loud to yourself.

### Exchange 1

Audio content is not available in this format.

### Exchange 2

Audio content is not available in this format.



## Exchange 3

Audio content is not available in this format.

## 8 Build a language notebook

At the end of each week we will suggest activities you may do to consolidate what you have been learning, before you progress to the next week. Remember the advice from the start of this week that you will build your language skills little by little. It's very important for you to keep returning to vocabulary and structures you have been learning, as well as adding new ones.

Without checking back, can you remember a formal and an informal way to say 'hello'? What is the difference between the singular pronoun *nǐ* and *nín*?

You may have answered these questions with ease, but how quickly will you remember the answers in two- or three-weeks' time? Now is the time to get organised and start formalising the way you develop your language skills.

This is something which is entirely personal to you. You may find that the way you go about it changes; don't worry if that happens. The important thing is that you find a way to note down new vocabulary and expressions but also tips about pronunciation, grammar, culture and communication in general that will support you as you start to learn Chinese.

How will you do this? Whether you keep your notes on paper or electronically, it's important to get organised, so here is an idea that may help, based on your Week 1 studies:

### Activity 7

**Table 1 Language notebook**

Key phrases in Pinyin	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Pronunciation (including tones)	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Culture	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Language	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

What would you write into each box above, if anything? Would you add more boxes?

### Discussion

This is a suggestion as to how you may have filled in the boxes.

**Table 2 Example of a completed language notebook for Week 1**

Key phrases in Pinyin	<i>nǐ hǎo, nín hǎo, xièxie, bú xiè, zàijiàn</i>
Pronunciation (including tones)	<i>a, o, e, i, u, ü</i> <i>mā, má, mǎ, mà, ma</i> <i>j, z, x</i>

Culture

Using *nín hǎo* when greeting someone who is senior (age or position) or who you meet for the first time.

Chinese people will shake hands instead of hugging or kissing each other when greeting to each other.

Language

*nǐ hǎo* for informal greeting, *nín hǎo* for formal greeting

Pinyin is the most accepted system used for transcribing Mandarin Chinese into the Latin alphabet. In Mandarin Chinese, there are four tones (five if the neutral tone is included). Same syllables with different tones often have different meanings and with different character forms.

Tone changes:

- two 3rd tone syllables together, the first syllable's 3rd tone will be pronounced as 2nd tone. E.g. *nǐ hǎo* → ***ní hǎo***
- when *bù* (4th tone in isolation) is followed by another 4th tone syllable, it changes to the 2nd tone *bú*. E.g. *bù xiè* → ***bú xiè***

You may have filled the boxes in differently, or you may have a different idea about how to build on what you are learning. Your learning journey is personal, so you need to keep notes in a way that is appropriate to you.

Take some time now to establish your own language notebook.

## 9 This week's quiz

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Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week quiz.

[Week 1 quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link), then return here when you have done it.

## 10 Practising and consolidating

The best way to remember new vocabulary and key phrases is to practise. What did you score for the Week 1 Quiz? What did you find difficult? How could you manage better next time?

In Week 1, you were introduced to an important point of pronunciation which should help with your listening and speaking skills. Did you practise the different sounds *j* and *x*? Why not return to that section and practise again?

### Activity 8

If you would like further practice, match the following Pinyin words to their corresponding English.

*nǐ hǎo*

*xièxie*

*nín hǎo*

*zàijiàn*

*nǐ chī le ma*

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Hello

Thank you

How do you do?

Bye

Have you eaten?



# 11 Practising and expanding

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Now have a go at Activity 9.

## Activity 9

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 12 Summary of Week 1

Now you have reached the end of Week 1, reflect a little on what you have learnt.

### Activity 10

In the box below, note down what you have found easy, useful or fun, and what was more difficult this week.

*Provide your answer...*

You have come to the end of Week 1. Next week, you will be learning how to respond to questions, such as 'how are you?', say numbers, and you will be able to work further on your pronunciation and listening skills.

*Tài bằg le!* (Well done!)

You can listen to how this phrase is pronounced below.

Audio content is not available in this format.



# Week 2: Responding to greetings

## Introduction

---



**Figure 1**

Last week, you learnt how to say 'hello' and 'goodbye', 'thanks' and 'not at all' and practised a few Pinyin sounds with tones. This week, you will carry on learning how to respond to greetings and thanks, together with personal pronouns. At the same time, you will be introduced to more Pinyin sounds and numbers from 0 to 99. You might find learning Chinese numbers is relatively easy; as long as you have learnt numbers 1–10, you can easily count to 99. Whilst learning Pinyin sounds, you will also learn some Pinyin spelling conventions. It is important to know proper Pinyin spellings, as you might want to word-process Chinese characters later on and the Pinyin input method is the most popular way to do so.

In the quiz section, you will have the opportunity to test yourself on what has been covered in Week 2. In the final consolidation and extension section, you will continue to build your own language notebook and practise your reading and listening skills.



# 1 Asking 'how are you?'



**Figure 2**

When meeting people, you don't just say 'hello'. You might also want to ask someone 'how are you?'. Listen to the recording below to find out how to say this in Chinese and how to respond to it. You can listen to this short conversation more times, until you are familiar with the phrases.

Audio content is not available in this format.

## Asking questions with the particle *ma*

In Week 1, you learnt the common greeting *Nǐ hǎo*, which literally means 'you well'. If you want to ask someone 'Are you well?', all you need to do is to add the question particle *ma* at the end of the statement without changing the sentence order:

*Nǐ hǎo ma?* (lit. you well + particle *ma*?) Are you well? / How are you?

Whenever you ask for confirmation rather than for new information, add *ma* to the end of a statement.

## Activity 1

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## Omission of the verb 'to be'

The common response to the greeting *nǐ hǎo ma* is:

*Wǒ hěn hǎo* (lit. I very good) I'm very well.

When you say, 'I am very well' in Chinese, there is no need to use the verb 'to be'. It is because many adjectives also function as verb-adjectives with 'to be' incorporated. So *hǎo* here can be translated as 'be well'. This is a distinctive feature of the Chinese language.

## 2 Asking 'how about you?'

Listen to this short conversation, where two people exchange greetings. Listen to it several times to see if you can catch what they are saying. Reveal the transcript whilst listening, if that helps.

Audio content is not available in this format.

### Activity 2

Now read the transcript below and translate the last two sentences into English, paying attention to the words in bold. Click on 'Reveal answer' to check your answer.

Female: *Nĩ hảo mả?*

Male: *Wố hễn hảo, nĩ **ne**?*

Female: *Wố **yể** hễn hảo.*

#### Answer

*Nĩ **ne**?* means 'How about you...?' or 'And you?'. *Ne* is a question particle often added after a personal pronoun or a proper noun, which is used to form a follow-up question in a known context, without the need to repeat the whole question.

*Wố **yể** hễn hảo* means 'I am very well too' (lit. 'I also very well'). The adverb *yể* (also, too) can never be put at the beginning or end of a sentence. It is usually placed before the verb or verb-adjective.

### Activity 3

Listen to the same recording again and drag the right sentences into the blanks to complete the conversation, according to what you hear. Listen as many times as you wish. Only reveal the transcript, when you have completed the activity.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 3 Responding to *xièxie* (thanks)



**Figure 3**

In Week 1, you learnt how to respond to thanks using *bú xiè*. Listen to the recording to refresh your memory.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Now listen to the following recording and pay attention to another way of responding to *xièxie*. Reveal the transcript whilst repeating, if you wish.

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### Respond to *xièxie*

As with many other languages, there are different ways to respond to 'thank you' in Chinese. Apart from *bú xiè* (lit. no thanks), *bú kèqǐ* (lit. no polite) is another commonly used expression. It is the equivalent to 'you are welcome' in English. Here are some other expressions that can be used:

- *Nǐ tài kèqǐ le* (lit. 'you too polite') It can be loosely translated as 'you are very welcome.'
- *Zhè méi shénme* (lit. 'this no thing') It means 'it is nothing'. Another similar expression is *Méi shìr* (lit. 'no thing'). Again, it means 'nothing' or 'no big deal'.

- *Yīnggāi de* (lit. should be) By saying this, the speaker thinks what he/she did is his/her duty.

Note that people respond to *xièxie* with different expressions depending on the context. The important thing is to be polite and show your gratitude.

#### Activity 4

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 4 Personal pronouns

Now have a go at Activity 5 below which looks at personal pronouns.

### Activity 5

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### The plural suffix: *men*

The suffix *men* is added to personal pronouns to pluralise them. It is pronounced with a neutral tone.

wǒ (I; me) + *men* [plural] → *wǒmen* (we, us)

nǐ (you) + *men* [plural] → *nǐmen* (you [plural])

tā (she, her / he, him) + *men* [plural] → *tāmen* (they, them)

**Note:** Chinese characters for 'she/her' and 'he/him' are different. However, they share exactly the same pronunciation. Therefore, when hearing people saying *tā*, you won't be able to understand whether they are referring to 'she/her' or 'he/him' without context.

### Activity 6

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 5 Numbers from 0 to 99

In Week 1, you heard the numbers from 0 to 5 in Chinese. Here you can listen to them again to refresh your memory.

- 0 *líng*
- 1 *yī*
- 2 *èr*
- 3 *sān*
- 4 *sì*
- 5 *wǔ*

Audio content is not available in this format.

Now listen to numbers 6–10 in Chinese. Listen several times, until you are familiar with them.

- 6 *liù*
- 7 *qī*
- 8 *bā*
- 9 *jiǔ*
- 10 *shí*

Audio content is not available in this format.

### Good and bad numbers

As in most cultures, numbers have specific connotations in Chinese. For instance, Chinese regard eight as a lucky number because it sounds very similar to the word for 'get rich' (*fā*) or 'good fortune' in Cantonese. More importantly, eight lies at the heart of an ancient Chinese belief system, built around an eight-sided diagram called 八卦 *bā guà*. It has often been seen as providing a guide to life and has been applied to contexts as diverse as urban planning and diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine. Because eight is a lucky number, the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games opened at 8 p.m. on the 8th day of the 8th month in 2008! Four, on the other hand, is not a good number in Chinese culture as 四 *sì* sounds similar to the word 死 *sǐ* meaning 'death' or 'to die'.

### Activity 7

Listen to this telephone number. Can you write down the number you hear? Listen as many times as you want.

Audio content is not available in this format.

Provide your answer...

### Answer

021 8549 3677

In some northern dialects, when saying telephone numbers, the number one is usually pronounced *yāo* to avoid confusion between the numbers one (*yī*) and seven (*qī*).

Telephone numbers are always given digit by digit in Chinese: e.g. 77 would be 'seven seven', rather than 'double seven'.

## The numbers 0–99

Once you know the numbers 1–10 in Chinese, it is easy to form the rest of the numbers up to 99. For example:

*shíyī* 11 (ten one)

*shí'èr* 12 (ten two)

*èrshí* 20 (two ten)

*sānshí* 30 (three ten)

*sìshí* 40 (four ten)

*èrshíyī* 21 (two ten one)

*èrshí'èr* 22 (two ten two)

When you come to read Chinese, you will notice that Chinese people frequently write down numbers in Arabic numerals (0, 1, 2, etc.) – a habit that has become increasingly widespread in recent years. The numeral '0' is used particularly often because the Chinese character for zero (零) is so complicated.

## Activity 8

Interactive content is not available in this format.



## 6 Pronunciation

In Week 1, you learnt some Pinyin initials, such as *j*, *z*, *x*, *zh*, *g*, *h*, *n*, *b* and single vowel finals, *a*, *o*, *e*, *i*, *u* and *ü*. Here you will learn some more initials and the pronunciation of *i* when it follows certain initials. Furthermore, you will understand the spelling conversions for *i* and *u*.

### Initials

In Pinyin most of the consonant sounds are pronounced similarly to their equivalents in English.

Try to pronounce the following initials below, following the explanations given.

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| <i>c</i>  | similar to <b>ts</b> in ' <i>cheats</i> ' or ' <i>meets</i> '  |
| <i>s</i>  | as <b>s</b> in ' <i>sit</i> '  |
| <i>ch</i> | similar to the <b>ch</b> in ' <i>church</i> ' and ' <i>match</i> ' (with the tip of the tongue curled) |
| <i>sh</i> | similar to the <b>sh</b> in ' <i>English</i> ' and ' <i>wish</i> ' (with the tip of the tongue curled) |
| <i>q</i>  | similar to the <b>ch</b> in ' <i>cheese</i> ' and ' <i>cheek</i> '                                     |

### The pronunciation of *i*

Note that when *z*, *c*, *s*, *zh*, *ch*, *sh* and *r* precede the single final *i*, *i* is not pronounced the same way as it is after *j*, *q* and *x*. It is a short vowel extension of the initials preceding it.

Click [here](#) to listen to how the variant of *i* is pronounced after *j*, *q*, *x*, *z*, *c*, *s*, *zh*, *ch*, *sh* and *r* when it is a short vowel extension of these initials. Repeat after each syllable.

Audio content is not available in this format.

### Activity 9

In this activity, you'll have a go at practising your pronunciation of the *i* sound in combination with some initials. Click on the 'Listen' button of the audio player to listen to three pairs of syllables, then record yourself. Press the 'Record' button **once** to start, and then click again when you have finished your recording. Use the 'Play back' button to listen to yourself, and then press 'Listen' button again to compare it to the model reading. Read the transcript, if you need to. You can record yourself as many times as you wish; your last recording will be saved.

Now, listen, record and listen again to the following three pairs of syllables.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

Voice Recorder is not available in this format.

## Spelling conventions

In Pinyin, there are various spelling conventions to be aware of when writing compound finals, depending on the combination of finals and initials. Here are some of the rules that apply to the syllables you have met so far.

### Spelling conventions for *i*

- When there is no initial before a compound final starting with *i*, replace the *i* with a *y*: e.g. *ie* → *ye*. (*yě*, also)
- When the single final *i* is a syllable on its own, *y* must be added in front of it: e.g. the number one is *yī*.

### Spelling conventions for *u*

- When there is no initial before a compound final starting with *u*, replace *u* with *w*: e.g. *uo* → *wo*. (*wǒ*, *lǐ* me)
- When the single final *u* is a syllable on its own, *w* must be added in front of the *u*: e.g. the number five is *wǔ*.

## 7 What would you say?

Based on what you have learnt so far in this course, have a go at answering the questions in the next activity.

### Activity 10

Listen to the following and decide on an appropriate response to each of them.

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## 8 Build a language notebook

Now is the time to note down the new vocabulary, expressions and tips about pronunciation, culture and communication you have learned this week. You can use the table below or make notes on paper or in your own electronic notebook if you would prefer.

### Activity 11

**Table 1 Language notebook**

Key phrases in Pinyin	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Pronunciation	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Culture	<i>Provide your answer...</i>
Language	<i>Provide your answer...</i>

What would you write into each box above, if anything? Would you add more boxes?

### Discussion

This is a suggestion as to how you may have filled in the boxes.

**Table 2 Example of a completed language notebook for Week 2**

Key phrases in Pinyin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>nǐ hǎo ma?</i></li> <li>• <i>wǒ hěn hǎo, nǐ ne?</i></li> <li>• <i>wǒ yě hěn hǎo.</i></li> <li>• <i>bú kèqi.</i></li> </ul>
Pronunciation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pronunciation of <i>i</i> when it is after <i>z, c, s, zh, ch, sh, r,</i> and <i>j, q, x</i></li> </ul>
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Different ways to reply to 'thanks'</li> <li>• How to read telephone numbers</li> <li>• Lucky &amp; unlucky numbers</li> </ul>
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use <i>nǐ ne</i> short questions to ask 'and you?' or 'how about you?'</li> <li>• Pinyin spelling convention rules of '<i>i</i>' and '<i>u</i>'</li> <li>• Personal pronouns: <i>nǐ, wǒ, tā, nǐmen, wǒmen, tāmen</i></li> <li>• Numbers 0–99</li> <li>• Read two-digit numbers</li> <li>• Adverb <i>yě</i> (also, too) never goes at the start or end of sentences</li> </ul>

You may have filled the boxes in differently, or you may have a different idea about how to build on what you are learning. Your learning journey is personal, so you need to keep notes in a way that is appropriate to you.

Take some time now to add to your own language notebook.

## 9 This week's quiz

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Check what you've learned this week by taking the end-of-week quiz.

[Week 2 quiz](#)

Open the quiz in a new window or tab (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link), then return here when you have done it.

## 10 Practising and consolidating

Complete Activity 12 below to help consolidate what you have learned so far this week.

### Activity 12

Listen to the following recordings and drag the correct English equivalent to match to each one. Please listen as many times as you wish. Whilst listening, please reveal the transcript, if you wish.

Audio 1

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 2

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 3

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 4

Audio content is not available in this format.

Audio 5

Audio content is not available in this format.

Are you well?

I am fine/very well, and you?

You are welcome.

I am also fine/very well.

You are very welcome.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Audio 1

Audio 2

Audio 3

Audio 4

Audio 5



## 11 Practising and expanding

Activity 13 below will help you to train your ear to listening to Chinese. Have a go now to finish this week.

### Activity 13

It is time to train your ear again. Listen to each sentence. Drag and drop the given syllables into the order in which you hear them. Don't worry if you don't know the meanings: you will learn them next week.

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Interactive content is not available in this format.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

## 12 Summary of Week 2

Now you have reached the end of Week 2, reflect a little on what you have learnt.

### Activity 14

In the box below, note down what you have found easy, useful or fun, and what was more difficult.

*Provide your answer...*

You have now come to the end of this course *Tài bàng le!* (Well done!)

You can listen to how this phrase is pronounced below.

Audio content is not available in this format.

This course has been developed from extract parts of [LXC001 - Beginners Chinese 1: 开始吧 kǎishǐ ba!](#). Visit the [OpenLearn's hub for language](#) content where you will be able to build on your newly found language skills.

## Acknowledgements

This free course was first published in December 2020.

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#### Week 1

Week 1, Figure 1: miko315 / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Week 1, Section 4, Activity 3, Two men shaking hands at a restaurant: Qian Kan

Week 1, Section 4, Activity 3, People saying goodbye: leungchopan/Shutterstock

Week 1, Section 4, Activity 3, People shaking hands in business clothes: Vitchanan Photography / iStock / Getty Images Plus

## **Week 2**

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