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Survival Phrases - Chinese (Part 2)

Lessons 31-60

Survival Phrases - Chinese (Part 2)

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Lesson 31: Can You Take My Picture?
请帮我照照片。Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn.

LESSON NOTES

We know there's an awful tourist stereotype in everyone's head: dorky, somewhat overweight person with a safari hat and large khaki shorts constantly saying to their significant other in a loud, nasal voice, "Hey! Take my picture with..." Running into this person when you're on vacation is enough to make you sheepishly put your camera back in your bag. "I'll remember what it was like to be here," you think. "I need to just experience the moment." You'll remember that moment a lot better if you take a couple pictures.

Nobody comes back from a trip and thinks, I wish I had taken less pictures. Yes, you don't want to let your camera get in the way of you experiencing the things around you, but pictures help you remember those experiences. So take your camera out of your bag, snap a few photos, a smile later when you see them.

The Chinese are in love with their cameras. They love to take up silly poses, flash the "peace" sign, and smile. Young Chinese people often go to photo booths and take a series of photos which they cut out and put in books or stick on their cell phones. People sitting bored at their friend's house will say, Hey, let's take some pictures, and in a few minutes they'll all be giggling as they review the photos. Maybe there's something we can learn here. Maybe we don't need to be so serious about our cameras, so worried about looking cool. Maybe we'd have more fun, and more memories, if we sometimes let our cameras drag us where they want to go.

There are times to be serious, to quietly consider Buddhist murals, to stare into the pale, blue sky; but there is nothing wrong with following this up with a wacky picture of you and three Chinese tourists all in their matching tour group hats, all smiling big and throwing up two fingers. (You'll know what we're talking about with the hats once you get to China.) Maybe you can all go for beer afterwards; though the tourists will probably have to get back on their bus.

The Chinese think nothing of asking bystanders to snap pictures of them and their friends, and Chinese people often enjoy being asked. Especially young people. You will be surprised how excited a young Buddhist monk will be when trying to take your photo. He will smile and show you the picture and ask if you want another one. His friends will push him to give them the camera so that he can go join you in the photo. (Young Buddhist monks are not very different from normal young people.)

Today's phrase is "Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn." It literally means "Please help me shoot picture." "Qǐng" means "please." "Bāng" means "to help." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "Qǐng bāng wǒ." means "Please help me." You can use this phrase anytime you need a hand. Maybe you

need someone to help you move a table or to carry a tray. This phrase is not appropriate if you are in mortal danger; we'll go over a phrase that means "Save me!" in a later lesson. (Though, if you're in mortal danger, perhaps appropriateness is not the most pressing concern.)

"Zhào zhàopiàn" means "to take pictures." "Zhàopiàn" means "photograph." "Zhào" is a verb which means "to illuminate" or "to take a picture." If we take these two phrases together ("qǐng bāng wǒ" and "zhào zhàopiàn") we get our complete phrase "Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn." ("Please take my picture.") Isn't it wonderful how, in Chinese, we can just smush different phrases and words together and they work as a complete sentence?

We can make this phrase more friendly by adding "ba" to the end. "Ba" is a particle that is placed at the end of sentences and lightens their tone. It can change an order into a request or a suggestion. "Zǒu" means "to walk" or "to go." Someone could order another person to get moving by yelling "Zǒu!" Adding "ba" makes it a suggestion, it changes "Go!" into "Let's go." ("Zǒu ba.") Generally people people make the suggestion to leave by saying "Zǒu ba." If we add "ba" to the end of today's phrase (which was already polite and friendly) it makes the phrase even nicer. "Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn ba."

When was the last time you said "Cheese!" when taking a photo? You were probably in grade school. That's kind of the same place "Qiézi!" holds in the Chinese lexicon. Yes, it's something one says when one is little, the act of saying it forces your mouth into a smile, but no one says it when they're grown up. That's also why it's fun for foreigners to say it. "Qiézi!" is somewhat absurd (it means "eggplant"). It will make you laugh, and it will make the Chinese people around you laugh, too. (Of course, when you think about it, yelling "Cheese!" at a camera is equally absurd.) Everyone likes to act like a kid, but no one wants to initiate the horseplay. You'll get extra points if you can help everyone lighten up.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请帮我照照片。	Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn.	Please take my picture.
请帮我照照片吧。	Qǐng bāng wǒ zhào zhàopiàn ba.	Please take my picture. (More friendly.)
走吧。	Zǒu ba.	Let's go.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please
帮	bāng	to help
我	wǒ	I, me
照	zhào	to illuminate, to take pictur
照片	zhàopiàn	photograph
茄子	qiézi	eggplant
外国人	wàiguórén	foreigner
老外	lǎowài	foreigner
吧	ba	article that lightens the tone o
走	zǒu	to walk, to go

QUICK TIP

Many Chinese tourists come from rural areas and there will be lots of new things for them in the city. You are one of those things. Foreigners do not often venture into China's countryside. You may be the first foreigner that many of your fellow tourists have seen, especially if you go to more isolated tourist destinations. This may cause them to act in ways that at first seem novel, but can get kind of annoying. People will whisper and glance at you. Some will tap their kids on the head and point, as if you were the tiger at the zoo and you had just come out of your cave. People will turn to each other and say, "Foreigner!" The most proper way to say foreigner in Chinese is "Wàiguórén." This literally means "foreign country person." "Wài" means "outside" and "guó" means "country." "Wàiguó" thus means "foreign country." "Rén" means "person." Together "wàiguórén" means "foreigner." This is the formal way of saying "foreigner," but most people say "lǎowài" instead. "Lǎo" means "old" and it is generally a term of respect. "Wài" is the word we just mentioned which means "outside." Because of the use of "lǎo" some people will make the argument that "lǎowài" is more respectful than the straightforward "wàiguórén." But the extremely laid-back, common, and informal way in which "lǎowài" is used suggests that it does not carry any extra meaning or respect. You are equally likely to hear a Chinese person use it when they are disparaging foreign incursions into China as you are when they are talking about their good friend. The Chinese don't seem to think anything of calling foreigners "lǎowài" and even after you have become friends they may continue to refer to you as the "lǎowài." (Possibly because it's hard to remember your name.)

Some Westerners take offense at constantly being called "lǎowài," even by people they know. They don't like being pointed at or whispered about. (Now that you know the word "lǎowài" you may hear it often echoing through the conversations around you, even in big cities.) These are not things we would do in our home countries, it would be rude and borderline xenophobic to make issue of someone's nationality, but we have to remember that we are not in our home countries. The reason we wanted to go to China is because it's different. If you don't want to experience anything different, perhaps you should take some time to seriously consider why you are coming to China. This is a stereotype and a generalization, but China has been isolated for a long time. China has a long history of being self-sufficient and has thus developed the feeling that it doesn't need to communicate with the outside world. (Compare this with the reality of England.) For about 600 years China did not send feelers into the outside world. They did not accept foreigners. Yes, we can self-righteously say, "And see what good it did them?" We can talk about Chinese people as backward and ignorant, but none of this gets us anywhere. In fact, in judging Chinese people, we are doing exactly the thing we ridicule the Chinese for: we are arbitrarily condemning other cultures. Except we do it in an even more noxious manner: we go to those other cultures, stand on their soil, and tell them how wrong they are. At least the Chinese had the humility to keep to themselves.

Keeping an open mind is necessary if you're going to get the most out of a new country, but that may not stop the gut-twisting feeling you get from being pointed at. One method of dealing with this is to play along. To smile and wave when you see people pointing at you. To wink at someone when you hear them say "lǎowài." This may embarrass them or it may encourage them. Little children will wave back, often pushed on by their parents. This tactic can be fun at times, but it can also get tiring. Clowns get paid to do their job, you're supposed to be on vacation. Other foreigners will choose to ignore those around them. This an be equally exhausting. In the end, there is no perfect way to deal with this and no one will blame you if, at the end of the day, you want to spring for a nice restaurant just to get away from the crowds.

QUICK TIP 2

Random Chinese people saying "Hello!" to you on the street can be either cute or obnoxious depending on who's doing it and how you view it. Just as we said before, many Chinese people, especially those from rural areas, have very few opportunities to interact with foreigners. Some of them, spurred on by a mixture of reasons, will call out to you in the middle of the street. Little children will squeak out a bashful "Hello." when egged on by their parents or a bright-faced, screaming "Hello!" on their own initiative. That is cute. More annoying are the men who, from a passing van or the other side of the street, yell "Hello!" and then fall back into the giggles of their group. Again, your feeling about this depends on how you view it; and also how many times it's happened today. The Chinese will tell you that these people are just being friendly. They don't know any other English words, so this is the only way they can communicate. This is what the men will say if you confront them, and, actually, if they learn you can speak some Chinese, they will be very friendly. But these reasons still sound hollow to most foreigners. The giggles that come after the "Hello!" and the fact that it's not followed by any attempt at further communication suggest that you're being made fun of. And, unfortunately, that's just something you'll have to deal with. China is a large, wonderful place. You are going to have lots of new experiences. But you don't get to choose which new experiences you want to have and which you don't. That's part of what makes new things exciting. If you just hand selected your every experience, it wouldn't be very new.

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Lesson 32: How Do You Say This In Chinese?
这个用中文怎么说？Zhège yòng Zhōngwén zěnme shuō?

LESSON NOTES

Do you want to learn to read Chinese newspapers? Do you want to read classic Chinese poetry? Well, you're in the wrong place. We here at SurvivalPhrases.com aim to teach communication.

Reading Chinese is an admirable skill. Chinese poetry is multi-layered, beautiful, and says things about life that still echo. But reading Chinese is very different from speaking and understanding Chinese. First of all, the way a character is written often has nothing to do with it's sound. It's not like English where you can sound out the words and if you know how to speak you can probably write. Many people can speak Chinese just fine, but can't read a lick. (Just ask some second generation Chinese Americans how much they can read.) This is not to say that illiteracy doesn't hamper you in China. It would be nice to be able to read signs and menus at least, but it doesn't necessarily have anything to do with communication.

Secondly, written Chinese is composed in a style very different from spoken Chinese. The Chinese have something they refer as "book language" which uses a whole bunch of characters that are not used in everyday speech. English, of course, also has this difference between written and spoken language, but the difference in Chinese is much more exaggerated. Not only are there adjectives and verbs which would normally be considered too stuffy, but even basic grammar words for things like "to" and "from" are replaced with a new vocabulary. Reading Chinese poetry is a whole other thing entirely. Classic poetry uses classic Chinese which bears relation to modern Chinese, but is certainly not instantly legible. (Many of China's most famous poems come from the 7th and 8th century. You try reading 7th and 8th century proto-English. Was there English in the 7th century?) Poetry is also filled with allusions that come from the complex meanings of the characters and implications of things left out. Neither of these are generally found in speech.

Learning to read in Chinese requires dedicated study, intensive tutoring, and lots of dictionary time. SurvivalPhrases.com is meant to be the exact opposite. We give you the basics you need to get your ideas across. Today's phrase is a key to increasing your ability to communicate and being able to have longer, more detailed, and hopefully more meaningful conversations.

"Zhège yòng Zhōngwén zěnme shuō?" will allow you to pick up new vocabulary where ever you go. The phrase literally means "This use Chinese how say?" Using this phrase you can turn your every experience in China into a vocabulary lesson, which is really a lot more fun than it sounds.

"Zěnme" means "how" and "shuō" means "to say." Together, "Zěnme shuō?" means "How do you say?"

"Yòng" means "to use" and "Zhōngwén" is "Chinese." "Zhōngwén" is a combination of a character which means "middle" (as in "Zhōngguó" which means "China" or "the middle kingdom") and a character which means "culture" or "language." Together "yòng Zhōngwén" means "use Chinese" or "using Chinese."

We've gone over "zhège" many times before, it is "this" plus the universal measure word "ge."

Combining all the parts of our phrase we have "This using Chinese how do you say?" ("Zhège yòng Zhōngwén zěnme shuō?") This can be rearranged to become "How do you say this using Chinese?" Actually, word order in Chinese is not vitally important. We have taught you the way that that is correct and most natural, but if you put the Chinese words in English word order people would still understand. It would just be rather odd. ("Zěnme shuō zhège yòng Zhōngwén?")

There are many ways to say "Chinese" in Chinese. Among Chinese people the most commonly used is probably "Hànyǔ." (Though, any of a number of different words may be used.) Beginner Chinese students are usually taught "Zhōngwén" because it is easier to pronounce. If you want to use "Hànyǔ" instead, it doesn't change anything about the structure of the sentence. "Hànyǔ" uses different characters than "Zhōngwén" but the end meaning is the same. "Hàn" is the name of the majority race in China. Han people make up over 90% of the Chinese population. "Yǔ" means "language." (It doesn't have the added meaning of "culture" that "wén" has.) "Hànyǔ" and "Zhōngwén" are always interchangeable, you can just plug in "Hànyǔ" anywhere in the place of "Zhōngwén." If we use "Hànyǔ" in today's phrase it becomes "Zhège yòng Hànyǔ zěnme shuō?" Again, both phrases mean "How do you say this in Chinese?" though you should feel free to use "Zhōngwén" if you find it easier to pronounce.

If you want a particular English word translated you can ask a Chinese friend how to say that word by making a small adjustment in the phrase we just learned. Just replace "zhège" with a word in English. Let's use the example "boat" that Michael used in the lesson. "Boat yòng Zhōngwén zěnme shuō?" Before, our phrase meant "How do you say this in Chinese?" now the phrase means "How do you say boat in Chinese?" (By the way, "boat" is "chuán.")

This tactic actually works surprisingly well. Although most Chinese people speak very poor English, many people, especially young people, have studied it for a long time in school. These people have built up a reasonably large vocabulary, they probably can even read pretty well, they've just never had the chance to put their English into use. For this reason they may understand many individual words, they just can't make them into sentences. (English grammar is much harder than Chinese grammar.) So if you ask them about a single word, especially if you write it down, there is a good chance they'll know how to translate it.

But, when they do translate it, you might not understand them on the first try. That's where we bring back an old friend, all the way from the ninth lesson, "Qǐng zài shuō yībiàn." If you don't remember, this means "Please say it again." (Now that we have gone over measure words, perhaps "yībiàn" makes more sense. "Biàn" is a measure word for actions that are the same when repeated.)

Good luck out there guys (and girls). And, remember the dictionary is your friend, but it's important to branch out.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这个用中文怎么说？	Zhège yòng Zhōngwén zěnme shuō?	How do you say this in Chinese?
Boat 用汉语怎么说？	Boat yòng Hànyǔ zěnme shuō?	How do you say boat in Chinese?
请再说一遍。	Qǐng zài shuō yībiàn.	Please say it again.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这	zhè	this
个	ge	universal measure word
用	yòng	to use
中文	Zhōngwén	Chinese (language)
怎么	zěnme	how
说	shuō	to say
汉语	Hànyǔ	Chinese (language)
请	qǐng	please
再	zài	again
遍	biàn	measure word for actions that are the same when repeated, times
船	chuán	boat

QUICK TIP

Use new vocabulary as soon as you get it. As Michael said in the lesson, you're likely to forget 60 to 70% of the words you learn the first time you learn them. You can lower this percentage by bringing those words into your conversation soon after you've heard them. Repeating the word in your head is not enough. Just repeating the word doesn't give you any context by which to remember the word. Work out a way to slip your new vocabulary into your speech. The more contrived, the more outlandish your usage, the more likely the circumstances, and thus the word, are to get embedded in your memory.

QUICK TIP 2

Just as you are trying to learn Chinese, there are many, many Chinese people who want to practice their English. There are always people placing ads, either online or around college campuses, looking for foreigners so they can have a chance to speak Enlgish. Depending on where you go, it is very likely that you will approached at some point by a Chinese person who wants to make "friends." These encounters are harmless. It is not a scam, no one is trying to get anything out of you (except free English lessons). People who have been in China for a while have been approached like this many times and thus view these people as an annoyance. But if you are only going to be in China for a little while, this kind of encounter can be a great

opportunity. These lesson seekers can serve as free tour guides. They can be your friend on the inside who can tell many things about China, things they view as normal, that you wouldn't learn about otherwise. Plus, they can read menus and might know what's good. These people are not only interested in English, but will want to know all about your native country, how it differs from China and other countries, and what you think of China. In return, you shouldn't think twice about peppering them with every conceivable question you have about China. Many of these people are actually very nice and, although you may not become friends forever, you might find yourself with a new Chinese buddy.

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Lesson 33: Write It Down, Please.
请写下来。Qǐng xiěxiàlái.

LESSON NOTES

Why are you learning Chinese? Why are you taking these lessons? Are you just satisfying some curiosity? Are you going to China? Will this help you "survive," make sure you don't get lost, and generally help you enjoy your time there? Do you want to learn more?

Today's phrases are useful both as a way to get you around China and as a way to take your Chinese to the next level. By learning to say "Qǐng xiěxiàlái." ("Please write it down.") you can make our Chinese lessons here just one small part of the learning you do. We here at SurvivalPhrases.com don't want to monopolize your Chinese knowledge. Part of it is that we're lazy; but most of it is we really do hope that these lessons are a springboard into a greater understanding of both Chinese and China. If you just need these phrases to get around China, that's great and we're glad to help you. "Qǐng xiěxiàlái" can be used to help you remember the names of places and tell people where you need to go. If you want to take the next step, even better. This lesson's phrase becomes the gateway to all kinds of vocabulary. We hope this lesson is useful for both kinds of students.

The first part of the phrase is the word "qǐng." Here "qǐng" means "please." Just put it at the beginning of a sentence and it turns a demand into a polite request. Without "qǐng," the sentence can sound somewhat harsh.

The next part of the sentence is a little harder to understand. "Xiěxiàlái" is a simple verb ("xiě") with two modifiers added onto the end. "Xiě" means "to write." You could actually say to a Chinese person "Qǐng xiě." and they might understand; it would just sound very choppy. (Kind of like a robot extending its mechanical arm to you and buzzing out "Please write." In the context, you might understand, but it would certainly sound strange.) Adding "xiàlái" to the end of the verb makes it sound much more natural. "Xià" means "down," the person is going to write things "down." "Lái" is less intuitive for English speakers. "Lái" means "to come." There are many instances where the verbs "lái" or "qù" ("to go") are added onto the end of another verb. Here we can think of "lái" as indicating the direction which the knowledge or the writing is passing: the person is going to write something "down," and the knowledge (or the writing) is "coming" to you, the speaker; we can also think of the knowledge as coming out of the person and into the open.

"Qù" ("to go") is used as a modifier in other instances like "shuōchūqù." ("To speak+to exit+to go.") Altogether this would mean "to say", but it puts emphasis on someone taking meaning that is in their head and putting it out in speech. This is something intuitive for Chinese people, but,

as we said, this is not very intuitive for English speakers. It is way outside the scope of these lessons to explain all the instances where these modifiers are used. We just hope to prepare you so that you may recognize the modifier when you hear other people using it.

Altogether, our first phrase is "Qǐng xiěxiàlái." As many of you may have noted, "qǐng" and "xiě" are both third tones and thus, when one follows the other, their tones must be modified to make it possible for a normal person to say them. The third tone on "qǐng" becomes a second tone and the whole thing ends up being pronounced like this: "Qing2 xiěxiàlái."

As was written earlier, the phrase can be translated as "Please write it down." Note that "it" is nowhere to be found in the Chinese. In Chinese objects that are considered obvious based on context do not need to be placed in the sentence; you do not need to say "it." You can just say "Please write down." You might need to make it clear before using this phrase what you are talking about, which place name or new vocabulary you want written down; but after you have done this, the object does not have any place in the phrase. Try first repeating the words that you want them to write (or some approximation of these words; even those of us who speak Chinese very well often mispronounce new words our first couple times) and then say this lesson's phrase. It should work with no problem.

Chinese writing is not phonetic. (Though, in some places, parts of Chinese characters do symbolize a certain sound. You may notice this as you go along, but it by no means follows strict rules.) Looking at a new Chinese character you are not going to know how to say it. Just try, we dare you. So, unless you want to be spending even more time with your dictionary, we suggest that after you get somebody to write something down you then ask them to write the romanization so that you can remember how it is pronounced. (Or maybe so that you can look it up in the dictionary later and see it written clearly.) The romanizaton system for Chinese is called "pīnyīn." "Pīn" means "to put together" and "yīn" means "sound." To ask someone to write the romanization all you have to say is: "Qǐng xiě pīnyīn." ("Please write the pinyin.") You treat "xiě" just like the English verb "to write" in regard to adding an object. The object "pīnyīn" is simply tacked on behind "xiě," just like in English. There are, of course, ways to make this sound even more natural, but this simple phrase works just fine. Specifically, you should not add "xiàlái" in between "xiě" and "pīnyīn." Putting the modifiers onto the verb and then having an object makes for a very strange Chinese sentence. There is a more graceful way to use both together, it involves using the particle "bǎ" which will be explained in a later lesson about the post office.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请写下来。	Qǐng xiěxiàlái.	Please write it down.
请写拼音。	Qǐng xiě pīnyīn.	Please write the pinyin.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please
写	xiě	to write
下	xià	down
来	lái	to come
拼音	pīnyīn	pinyin

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English

QUICK TIP

Pinyin is not just for foreigners. Pinyin was adopted by the Chinese government in 1979 as a way of teaching Chinese to Chinese children. Think about it. When you were young, how did you learn to read books? You sounded things out. Now what if you were Chinese and everything you read was in characters that mostly had no phonetic value? It makes it very difficult to sound things out. Chinese children use pinyin in the exact same way foreigners do, to communicate the phonetics of characters. (There are also rumors that the Chinese government has had thoughts at various times of replacing the whole character system with a phonetic system.) Pinyin uses 26 characters. (All the roman alphabet except "v." Chinese has an "ü" which is sometimes written as a "v.") It is a totally regular system for transcribing Chinese sounds which makes it very easy to learn. All Chinese people under 30 are totally fluent in pinyin because of their education. Also, because pinyin is the way people enter characters into their phones for text messages and most computer typing systems rely on pinyin, this means it's almost certain that someone under 50 will also be well-versed in pinyin. Older people, however, do not always know how to use pinyin. For some reason, Chinese people are almost always surprised when foreigners are good at pinyin. How do they think we learn Chinese words?

QUICK TIP 2

Get people to write down place names. This is useful in at least two situations. 1. Cab drivers and other Chinese people aren't guaranteed to understand your burgeoning Chinese. Having the place you want to go written in Chinese makes for a fool-proof form of communication. 2. You can try to use the bus. Armed with the name of a bus station you can charge to the nearest bus stop and try to find that station on one of the signs. If there are no busses that go there directly, trying to get directions from people at the bus stop is a great way of practicing your Chinese.

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Lesson 34: How Do You Read This?
这个怎么读？Zhège zěnme dú?

LESSON NOTES

Chinese is a memorization language. While there is some phonetic value to some characters, this is not true for all characters. Many characters' pronunciations must simply be memorized. Today we have pinyin to keep a record of the phonetics for every character, but phoneticizations for Chinese are a recent advent. In the past, children learning characters often had no recourse but to simply remember what their teacher told them; or, this lesson's specialty, to ask other people.

As stated above, there is some phonetic value indicated in some characters' make up. Let's start from the bottom. We're going to use the character 湖 ("hú") for this demonstration because it is very straightforward in its representation of phonetics and it is a useful word to know. "Hú" means "lake."

Every character is made up of strokes. 湖 has 12 strokes, making it somewhat complicated, but certainly nowhere near the most complex of characters. These strokes are grouped as radicals. Radicals are the smallest meaningful groupings of strokes. Most radicals have a meaning that they symbolize and some also represent a certain sound. Some characters are made of only one radical, some have many radicals put together. The character 水 ("shǔi" "water") has only one radical. "Hú" is made up of three radicals.

Starting from the left of 湖, the first radical is the three strokes on the left-hand side. These three strokes are the water radical. They are not a character on their own, they only exist as a radical. Notice that they are different from the character for "water." When the water radical appears in a character (always on the left side) it says that the meaning of this character has something to do with water. This is not a hard and fast rule. Some characters with the water radical are only remotely connected with the idea of water, some have no connection at all. In the case of "hú" the connection is very clear. The water radical has no phonetic value, it tells you nothing about the sound of the word.

The next two radicals are characters in their own right: 古 and 月. ("Gǔ" and "yùe." They mean "ancient" and "moon" or "month" respectively.) In addition to being their own characters they also combine to form another character: 胡 ("hú"). This character is a word for the ancient non-Chinese races that lived to the northwest of China. It also means "beard." (Usually people say "húzi" for "beard.")

This character is important to our character for "lake" not for it's meaning, but for it's sound. The character for "lake" (湖 "hú") is a water radical plus a character that is pronounced "hú." The pronunciation for the character for "lake" is given by placing an already existing character with the same pronunciation inside it. The character's pronunciation is presented to you by making reference to another character.

First, we should point out that this only works because we have memorized the other character. If we did not know that first character we would have know clue as to how to pronounce this character for "lake." (Thus phonetic clues are useless until you have built up a small base of characters you already know.)

And, also, the phonetic indicators in a character are rarely this straightforward (if the character has any at all). With "lake" the character is exactly the same sound and tone as the character it imitates. Sometimes the phonetic part of the character tells you the sound of the character but not the tone. 东 ("dōng" "east") appears in 冻 ("dòng" "to freeze") where it tells you the sound, but not the tone. Sometimes you are given an approximate sound, not the exact sound of the character or the tone. 包 ("bāo" "to hold" or "bag") is used in 泡 ("pào" "bubble") and 跑 ("pǎo" "to run").

Thus phonetic parts of the character (when they appear) are not used in the way Westerners use the alphabet. The alphabet tells you directly the pronunciation of a word (though English can be somewhat confusing on this front). Phonetic radicals just give you hints. They do not really tell you the pronunciation if you have never seen a particular character before, rather they help jog the memory of someone who has already learned the character. Chinese is still a memorization language.

That's why you need today's phrase. "Zhège zēnme dú?" means "How do you read this?" "Zhège" we've been over many times, it is "this" plus the universal measure word. "Zēnme" means "how." "Dú" means "to read." Literally, we have "This how read?"

To use this phrase just point at something, a line in a book, an advertisement on a subway, and say the phrase.

Of course, once you get an answer, you're going to need today's second phrase: "Shénme yìsī?" ("What does it mean?" or "What do you mean?" depending on the context.) "Shénme" means "what" and "yìsī" means "meaning." Literally the phrase is "What meaning?"

(It is interesting to note that none of the characters in our phrases contain within them hints as to their pronunciation.)

After you have put these two phrases out you're probably going to want to bring in phrases from the last couple lessons as well as some older ones. "Qǐng xiěxiàlái." ("Please write it down.") will be useful, as well as "Zài shuō yībiàn." ("Please say it again.")

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这个怎么读？	Zhège zěnme dú?	How do you read this?
什么意思？	Shénme yìsī?	What does it mean?, What do you mean?

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这	zhè	this
个	ge	universal measure word
怎么	zěnme	how
读	dú	to read, to read out loud
什么	shénme	what
意思	yìsī	meaning

QUICK TIP

So how do you use a Chinese dictionary anyway? Flipping through a Chinese to English dictionary it becomes evident very quickly that it is organized alphabetically by pinyin. But we just said that looking at most characters you will have only the vaguest idea as to how to pronounce them, if you have any clue at all. So how do you go from totally mysterious pictograph to easy-to-pronounce pinyin?

The answer lies in the radicals. Remember? Those groups of strokes that are the inner organs of characters? In the beginning of any Chinese-English dictionary there is list of radicals grouped by how many strokes the radical has. Most dictionaries have over 170. Not every radical that appears in a character is on this list. The list contains the minimum number of radicals needed to cover every character in the dictionary. If a radical always occurs with other radicals, then there is no need to give that radical a special entry. (This will probably make more sense in a minute and will certainly make more sense when you try it yourself.)

If we were looking up 湖 ("hú") we would look up the water radical first (you generally start with the radical on the left or the top). The water radical has three strokes so we would look in the group of radicals with three strokes. When we found that radical we would see it has a number assigned to it. Let's say 32 (that means it is the 32nd radical in the list of all radicals). After the section listing the radicals and a number corresponding to them, there is another section. This section is much bigger, it is a list of all the characters in the dictionary broken up by radical. The number 32 tells us where to find the characters with the water radical. When flip to list number 32 we find all the characters using the water radical broken up by number of strokes (not including the water radical). So now we count the number of strokes left in the character. 湖 has nine strokes in addition to the water radical. We move down the list of water radical characters to the section of characters with nine extra strokes. There are about 20 characters in this list. (The water radical may be the most common radical.) Now all we have to do is go down this list until we find our character. Once we find 湖 we see next to it the pinyin "hú." Now we can go look up the translation by using the pinyin.

This seems very complicated, and it is in comparison to looking up English words, but once you get used to it it doesn't take that much time at all.

QUICK TIP 2

There are two sets of Chinese characters in use in the world today (not counting the Chinese characters the Japanese use). The two sets are called "Simplified" and "Traditional" characters. Simplified characters are used in Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia, and to some extent in Hong Kong. Traditional characters are used in Taiwan and in many overseas Chinese communities, though the use of simplified Chinese is becoming more widespread as China becomes more open and more Mainland Chinese move to other parts of the world. Hong Kong used to use Traditional characters exclusively, but has been switching to some extent since reunifying with the mainland.

Since the beginning of the 20th century there had been lots of discussion among Chinese intellectuals about ways to reform the language to make it more open to the masses. One idea batted around a lot was the complete abolishment of Chinese characters or a drastic simplification. In the 1950's the Chinese government went through with this simplification. They took the traditional character system and went through it replacing radicals and characters that they thought had unnecessary strokes. The result is a set of characters with far fewer strokes than the traditional set.

It is hard to say what effect this has had on making the language accessible (Taiwan still has a slightly higher literacy rate than China, but Taiwan also has a much higher mean income), but it certainly makes hand-writing much easier. This, however, may not be a very large concern as computers become more and more ubiquitous.

Mainland Chinese people can generally read Traditional characters, though they may make mistakes when writing them. Traditional characters are still used in modern calligraphy. Most people in China and in Taiwan agree that the Traditional characters are more beautiful. But you, the student, should be thankful. Most Westerners find Traditional characters much harder to learn than simplified. In this sense, Simplified is indeed simpler.

To find out more about the two systems, please look them up on Wikipedia, they have excellent articles on how the systems differ and their histories, as well as arguments for and against each system.

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Lesson 35: Numbers 10-100
十一 yīshí

LESSON NOTES

The numbers from 10 to 100 follow a very simple system which we went over briefly in a previous lesson. This lesson is more of a review than anything else. We thought it might help you to hear a lot of the numbers spoken, just so you can get used to them. Let's start out with a list of the numbers 10 through 90 going by tens:

10: "shí"

20: "èrshí"

30: "sānshí"

40: "sìshí"

50: "wǔshí"

60: "liùshí"

70: "qīshí"

80: "bāshí"

90: "jiǔshí"

As you can see, making these numbers is simply a matter of designating a number of tens. To say "20" you just say "two tens" ("èrshí"). To say "50" you just say "five tens" ("wǔshí"). In our list above we wrote "10" as "shí," but you can also follow the same pattern you used with all the other numbers and say "yīshí" ("one ten"). (People rarely do this, and usually only when they need the extra syllable for a joke, pun, or song.)

To add ones to one of the numbers we listed above, you just have to say the number of ones after the number of tens. "11" is thus "shíyī" ("ten one"). A number like "43" is "sìshísān" ("four tens three"). There's nothing tricky about this system, no kinks, and no exceptions. (Though it makes us kind of worried to say something absolute like that. If you come across something troubling please let us know, leave a comment on the site.)

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
三十	sānshí	30
十一	shíyī	11
七十二	qīshíèr	72
一十	yīshí	10

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
零	líng	0
一	yī	1
二	èr	2
三	sān	3
四	sì	4
五	wǔ	5
六	liù	6
七	qī	7
八	bā	8
九	jiǔ	9
十	shí	10
发财	fācái	to get rich
死	sǐ	to die
点	diǎn	point, dot

QUICK TIP

What about numbers between 0 and 1? In Chinese the decimal point is vocalized by using the word "diǎn." This word literally means "dot" or "point." Saying numbers after the decimal point in Chinese is much like it is in English: you just list the numbers. "10.25" would be "shí diǎn èrwǔ" ("ten point two five"). "6.27" is "liù diǎn èrqī" ("six point two seven"). π is "sān diǎn yīsìyīwǔjiǔ..."

If there is no number in the one's column you must say "líng" ("zero") before you say "diǎn." It is not like English, where you can say "point two" for "0.2." "0.2" in Chinese is "líng diǎn èr" ("zero point two"). "0.125" is "líng diǎn yīèrwǔ."

QUICK TIP 2

Different cultures have different lucky numbers. China, of course, has it's own and the reasons are based on the language. The most basic lucky and unlucky numbers are eight and four.

"Eight," as we've said before, is "bā" in Chinese. This is a lucky number because it sounds somewhat similar to "fā." "Fā" means "to send out" or "to come out" (among many other things). This character is part of the word "fācái" ("to get rich"). "Fācái" is used in all sorts of traditional good wishes and congratulations. Thus "fā" has taken on this aura of good luck which it then transfers to "bā" the number that sound kind of like it.

The unluckiness of four is a lot more straightforward. "Four" in Chinese is "sì." "To die" in Chinese is "sǐ." Can you figure out why four might be unlucky?

Superstitions and references to these numbers come up all the time in China, most recently in mobile phone numbers. In China your phone number is attached to a SIM card which you buy separately from the phone. When you buy a SIM card you will be able to choose your number from a list of numbers the shop owns. Phone numbers with lucky numbers, with more eights and fewer fours, go for higher prices than those with more fours and fewer eights. Sometimes the price difference can be considerable. This trend probably hit its peak a few years ago and now people are more laid back about choosing numbers, but there is still a price difference.

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Lesson 36: Numbers 100-1,000
三百 sānbǎi

LESSON NOTES

Manipulating hundreds in Chinese is very simple, it's just like what we did with tens in the past. You just have to place a number from one to nine in front of the word for "hundred." "Hundred" in Chinese is "bǎi." Thus "100" is "yībǎi." Let's have a quick list of all the hundreds:

100: "yībǎi"

200: "èrbǎi"

300: "sānbǎi"

400: "sìbǎi"

500: "wǔbǎi" (Remember to change the tone on "wǔ" to second tone.)

600: "liùbǎi"

700: "qībǎi"

800: "bābǎi"

900: "jiǔbǎi" (Again, there are two third tones in a row so the tone on "jiǔ" is changed to second tone.)

The word for "thousand" in Chinese is "qiān," but there will be more about that in the next lesson.

Now the question is, what do we do for numbers a little more complex than the ones we've just mentioned? For example, how do you say "423"? The answer is that you just combine the different words we've learned. Combine the word for "400" with the word for "23." "400" is "sìbǎi." "23" is "èrshísān." Together, "423" is "sìbǎièrshísān." In Chinese, when saying numbers, you just go through the columns saying how many of that denomination there is; you say how many "hundreds," then how many "tens," then how many "ones." The "sìbǎièrshísān" we just quoted could be literally translated as "four hundreds two tens three." In English we make things complicated by saying "twenty," in Chinese you just say "two tens." Let's try a couple more numbers. "761" is "qībǎiliùshíyī." That was simple, we just went through each denomination again saying how many of that value there were. This rule even holds up for numbers like "218."

"18" in Chinese is "shíbā." ("Ten eight.") When we add hundreds we have to be clear about how many tens there are. Here there is one ten, so we say "one ten." "218" is "èrbǎiyīshíbā." ("Two hundreds one ten eight.") This number follows exactly the same rules as the other numbers.

The only exception comes when there is a zero in the tens column. When that happens you don't say "shí" ("ten") you just say "líng" ("zero") after the number of hundreds. "904" is "jiǔbǎilíngsì." "608" is "liùbǎilíngbā."

Saying this zero is important because it differentiates between the last number being in the tens column and the last number being in the ones column. Technically, "180" should be "yībǎibāshí" and "360" should be "sānbǎiliùshí." Both of these are right, but people often cut corners. The Chinese will often just say "yībǎibā" ("one hundred eight") to mean "180" and "sānbǎiliù" ("three hundreds six") to mean "360." They just leave the "shí" off the end. This is a quick way of saying numbers and people use it most of the time. This means it's vitally important that you say the "zero" in "904," lest it be mistaken for "940."

That's all for the hundreds. See you next time for thousands.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
三百	sānbǎi	300
五百四十九	wǔbǎisìshíjiǔ	549
一百一十七	yībǎiyīshíqī	117
二百零四	erbǎilíngsì	204
八百六	bābǎiliù	860
八百六十	bābǎiliùshí	8860
多少人？	Duōshǎo rén?	How many people?
几个人？	Jǐ ge rén?	How many people? (Under ten.)
几个人。	Jǐ ge rén.	A few people.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
百	bǎi	hundred
千	qiān	thousand
多少	duōshǎo	how much, how many
几	jǐ	how many (under ten), a few

QUICK TIP

This seems like as good a place as any to bring up the difference between "jǐ" and "duōshǎo." Remember "duōshǎo"? It came up in the phrase "Duōshǎo qián?" ("How much money?" or "What's the price?") "Jǐ" was used in the restaurant phrase "Jǐ ge rén?" ("How many people?") Both of them mean "how much" or "how many." So what's the difference? The difference is one

of quantity. "Jǐ" is used when you think the answer will be a small number, something under ten. "Duōshǎo" can technically be used in any situation, but is usually used in instances where the answer might be a large number.

The other difference is that "jǐ" must always be followed by a measure word, whereas this is not true for "duōshǎo." You say "Jǐ ge rén?" or "Duōshǎo rén?" depending on how large you think the answer's going to be.

QUICK TIP 2

We just said "jǐ" must be followed by a measure word. This is because "jǐ" is treated like a number. In addition to meaning "how many," "jǐ" can also mean "a few." Saying "Jǐ ge rén." as a statement and not a question means "A few people." "Jǐ ge chē." means "A few cars." In these sentences "jǐ" is as if it were a number with the value "a few." There is nothing to distinguish the phrases we just brought up from the questions "How many people?" and "How many cars?" except context and the way you say them. In English we often distinguish between a statement and a question by the tone of someone's voice. (For example: "You're going?" and "You're going.") This happens much less often in Chinese, but "jǐ" is one instance where it does happen.

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Lesson 37: Numbers 1,000-10,000
两万 liǎngwàn

LESSON NOTES

This should be the last lesson on numbering in Chinese. Hopefully, this lesson will answer any remaining questions you have about how to make Chinese numbers.

In the past we've covered all the numbers up to one thousand. We said the Chinese word for "thousand" is "qiān." Manipulating "qiān" is almost exactly like using "bǎi" ("hundred") or "shí" ("ten"), you just place a number from one to nine in front of it to indicate how many thousands the number you are talking about has. The only difference with "qiān" is that you use "liǎng" for "two" instead of "èr." Let's do a quick list of the thousands:

1,000: "yīqiān"

2,000: "liǎngqiān"

3,000: "sānqiān"

4,000: "sìqiān"

5,000: "wǔqiān"

6,000: "liùqiān"

7,000: "qīqiān"

8,000: "bāqiān"

9,000: "jiǔqiān"

Making a number of mixed thousands, hundreds, tens, and ones is done in the same way that we added hundreds, just add the number of thousands in front of the number of hundreds. Thus "4,327" is "sìqiān sānbǎi èrshí qī" ("four thousands three hundreds two tens seven"). "7,112" would be "qīqiān yībǎi yīshí èr."

Having zeros in the middle makes things more complicated. Just like when we were talking about hundreds, if there is a zero in the middle of a number it must be marked with a "líng" ("zero"). So "2,034" is "liǎngqiān líng sānshí sì." "8,304" is "bāqiān sānbǎi líng sì." If there are multiple zeros in the middle of a number these can be marked with only one "líng." For "1,008" you would

say "yīqiān líng bā." There are two zeros in a row, but you only need to say one "líng." Just for reference, "1,080" would be "yīqiān líng bāshí." The number after the "líng" let's you know how many zeros the "líng" represents.

In the hundreds lesson we talked about a short-cut that allows you to say "360" as "sānbǎiliù." This can be done with thousands and hundreds, too. If there is nothing but zeros after the hundreds column, in other words there are only two numbers from one to nine in your number, then you can knock the word "hundred" out of the number. Technically, "3,600" should be "sānqiān liùbǎi." Using the short-cut you can just say "sānqiān liù." Let's try one other number. "4,200"? That's "sìqiān èr." Got the idea?

Now what happens after 9,999? Here a change occurs that is very much like entering the thousands in English. In the West we put a comma after the thousands. This denotes that the thousands is a whole other denomination and we can talk about tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands (in a way that we cannot talk of tens of hundreds). China traditionally did not use these commas. If they had, they would certainly have placed the comma after the ten thousands. Ten thousand in Chinese is "wàn." "Wàn" in Chinese forms a new denomination much like "thousands" in English. The Chinese go from making numbers like "four thousand" to saying numbers like "four ten thousand." Then they move on up to "forty ten thousand," "four hundred ten thousand," and "four thousand ten thousand." In Chinese "40,000" is "sìwàn" ("four ten thousand"). "400,000" is "sìshí wàn" ("forty ten thousand"). "4,000,000" is "sìbǎi wàn" ("four hundred ten thousand"). "40,000,000" is "sìqiān wàn" ("four thousand ten thousand"). Kind of confusing, huh? It's a totally logical system, but the numbers are split up differently.

Using the "wàn" is exactly like using "qiān" except that you can say "ten" "wàn" ("shí wàn"). (Remember that "ten thousand" is one "wàn," you cannot say "shí qiān.") So a number like "53,876" is "wǔwàn sānqiān bābǎi qīshí liù." Just like with "qiān" you need to use "líng" to denote zeros in the middle of the number and "two" "wàn" is "liǎng wàn." So "27,003" is "liǎngwàn qīqiān líng sān." Though, we doubt you'll ever come across numbers this complicated.

That's about all you need to know. Let's try one last absurdly long number before we go. What's "2,598,761" in Chinese? "Èrbǎi wǔshí jiǔwàn bāqiān qībǎi liùshí yī." That was fun, right?

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
三千	sānqiān	3,000
八千五	bāqiān líng wǔ	8,005
两万	liǎngwàn	20,000
二百三十六万四千七百八十六	èrbǎi sānshí liùwàn sìqiān qībǎi bāshí liù	2,364,786
十三亿	shísān yì	1,300,000
六十亿左右。	Liùshí yì zuóyòu.	About 6 billion.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
千	qiān	thousand
万	wàn	ten thousand

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
亿	yì	hundred million
左	zuó	left
右	yòu	right

QUICK TIP

Just like you can't say "a thousand thousand" in English, one does not say "yīwàn wàn" in Chinese. When you get up to a number that big, you use a new denomination, the "yì." Each "yì" is one "hundred million." "Yì" is used in the same way as "wàn" with the ability to talk about hundreds and thousands of "yì." (Just like we talk about tens and hundreds of millions.) As the Arabic numeral system goes to a new denomination every three places, the Chinese system goes to a new denomination every four. These huge numbers are, of course, rarely used; except in the case of talking about population. The Chinese are often very eager to talk about the population of different places. In Chinese the population of China is "shísān yì." The population of the world is "liùshí sìyì." America's population is "sānyì." India has "shíyī yì." We'll leave you all to figure out those numbers.

QUICK TIP 2

Some of the numbers we've talked about in this lesson have been really tedious. In English would you ever say a number like 543,859? No. You'd say something like, "About 540,000." You can do this in Chinese, too. (And everyone will be thankful to you for saving their time.) "About" (in this usage) is "zuóyòu." "Zuó" means "left" and "yòu" means "right." "About 540,000." would be "Wǔshí sìwàn zuóyòu." "Zuóyòu" always follows the thing it is modifying. Good, now you can forget most of what you've learned.

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Lesson 38: Post Office

我想把这个送到东京。Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdào Dōngjīng.

LESSON NOTES

We all know you're going to buy a lot of stuff in China. You can't help it. Even people who say they hate souvenirs always end up coming back with some stuff. The post office can be very useful for getting your stuff back home or to the people you want to give it to. All those paintings you bought? Just roll them up, stick them in a tube, and send them back home. They'll meet you there. Your cousin Peter lives in Tokyo and you bought him a Chairman Mao's Collected Sayings? While it'd be nice to make a stop in Japan, it's probably easier to just send the book on it's way. And of course, there are post cards. Who doesn't like to get post cards? People with no hearts, that's who. Everyone else loves post cards.

Before we get into the lesson, the first thing to know is that "post office" in Chinese is "yóu jú." There is a picture of a post office attached to this PDF. Their striking green logos are easily recognizable. And now onto the lesson...

Today's phrase is the bare bones "I want to send this to..." Just bring your package, postcard, whatever to the counter and say, "Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdaò (the place you want it to go to)." In the lesson Michael used Tokyo as the place he wanted to send his package to. "Tokyo" in Chinese is "Dōngjīng." All places in the world have a Chinese name. Often times the Chinese place name mimics the name of the place in the language that the people living there speak. Thus "America" is "Měiguó." "Měi" means "beautiful," but it is used because it sounds something like the "mer" in "America." "Guó" means "country." "Germany" is "Déguó." "Déguó" sounds nothing like "Germany," but in German "Germany" is "Deutschland." The "dé" in the Chinese name mimics the German. ("Dé" means "virtue.") Place names for Japan, however, often sound nothing like the Japanese. Japanese uses many Chinese characters and Japanese place names are always written in Chinese characters. When saying a Japanese place name, the Chinese just take the characters and use the Chinese pronunciation. The characters for "Tokyo" in Japanese are pronounced "Dōngjīng" in Chinese.

So if we want to send a package to Tokyo we just say, "Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdaò Dōngjīng." ("I want to send this to Tokyo.") We can replace " Dōngjīng" with any other place name. If we want to send our package to New York we just say, "Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdaò Niǔyuē." ("Niǔyuē" is "New York" in Chinese.) This is a complicated phrase, so let's look at how it works, character by character. "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "Xiǎng" means to "to want to do something." "Xiǎng" can be placed before another verb to indicate a desire to do that action. Here "xiǎng" modifies "sòng" which means "to send." "Wǒ xiǎng sòng" means "I want to send." In this sentence though, "xiǎng" and "sòng" are interrupted by "bǎ." "Bǎ" indicates that the words coming after it are the object of the sentence. Here we have "bǎ zhège" ("zhège" means "this").

In English, the object always comes at the end of the sentence, after the verb. In Chinese, the object only sometimes comes at the end of the sentence. Here the verb "sòng" is modified with "daò," and then the destination follows "daò." ("Sòng" means "to send." "Daò" means "to arrive." Together they mean "to send to." "Sòngdaò Dōngjīng" means "to send to Tokyo.") Because there is a modifier ("daò") attached to the verb, there is no place at the end of the sentence to put the object. So we use "bă" to designate the object earlier in the sentence. The sentence, translated directly, is thus "I want this send to Tokyo." The "bă" tells us that "zhège" ("this") is the object of the sentence. The Chinese often use this sentence form when the verb gets cluttered by modifiers or destinations. "Bă" and the object that follows it are always placed immediately in front of the verb which is acting on them. Thus in our sentence "bă zhège" breaks up "xiăng" and "sòng." Once again, the full sentence is "Wŏ xiăng bă zhège sòngdaò Dōngjīng." ("I want to send this to Tokyo.") Note that in the beginning there are three third tones in a row. Using our rule of thumb, we break up these third tones by changing "xiăng" to a second tone.

So you bring a package into the post office, you wait in line, and, when it's your turn, you plop your package on the counter and say, "Wŏ xiăng bă zhège sòngdaò Dōngjīng." The response you hope to get is "Míngbaí le." "Míngbaí" means "to understand." When the clerk at the post office says, "Míngbaí le." it means they understand and they'll begin working on it. It's kind of like saying "Ok." If you just get a blank faced stare, you might want to try repeating yourself slowly.

There are a couple other words for different services at the post office that you should probably know. "Guàhaŏ" means "to register" and at the post office it means registered mail. (Literally, "guà" means "to hang" and "hào" means "number.") If you want to use registered mail you can say, "Wŏ xiăng guàhào." ("I want to register.") after you have talked about where you want to send your items to. (Remember to change "Wŏ" to a second tone.) " Tèkuài zhuāndì" means "express mail" or "special delivery." ("Tè" means "especially." "Kuài" means "fast." "Zhuān" means "specialty." "Dì" means "to give" or "to hand over.") If you want to use express mail, just say, "Wŏ xiăng yòng tèkuài zhuāndì." ("Yòng" means "to use." The whole phrase is "I want to use express mail." Don't forget to change "Wŏ" into a second tone.) Notice that both these phrases use "xiăng." These are further examples of how you can just put "xiăng" in front of any verb to mean "to want to do" that verb.

Originally we intended to list the prices for mailing packages, letters, and postcards within China and out of China, but the pricing system for the Chinese postal service is exceedingly complex (it varies based on both weight and distance) and our interns threatened bloody rebellion at this suggestion. Through long hours of mediation between staff and management, we have reached a compromise. We will list some example prices. Hopefully these will be helpful as a guide. Unfortunately, the only website we have found with a complete listing of pricing is China Post's main website, and this is only in Chinese. (The website is www.chinapost.gov.cn.) Here are some sample pricings:

A postcard within China costs .80 yuan.

A 20 gram letter within China costs at most 1.20 yuan.

Shipping a package by express mail within the country has base rate of 20 yuan for the first 500 grams. Each additional 500 grams cost 6, 9, or 15 yuan depending on how far you are sending the package.

Registered mail costs 3 yuan, but is only available for domestic mail.

Sending a postcard overseas costs 4.50 yuan.

Sending a 20 gram letter to Europe or America costs 6 yuan.

Sending a 500 gram package by express mail to Japan costs 180 yuan. Each additional 500 grams costs 40 yuan. (International shipping is cheaper if you are just sending books or other media.)

The same package costs 280 yuan to send to Europe and 240 yuan to send to America.

Sending a 100 gram package by standard mail to Europe, Australia, or America costs 18 yuan. 15 yuan is added for each additional 100 grams.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我想把这个送到东京。	Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdào Dōngjīng.	I want to send this to Tokyo.
明白了。	Míngbái le.	I understand. Ok.
我想把这个送到这儿。	Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdào zhèr.	I want to send this to here.
我想挂号。	Wǒ xiǎng guàhào.	I want to register. I want to use registered mail.
我想用特快专递。	Wǒ xiǎng yòng tèkuài zhuāndì.	I want to use express mail.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
邮局	yóujú	post office
想	xiǎng	to want (to do something)
把	bǎ	particle that marks the words following it as the object of a sentence
这个	zhège	this
送	sòng	to send, to give
到	dào	to arrive, to
东京	Dōngjīng	Tokyo
明白	míngbái	to understand
美国	Měiguó	The USA
德国	Déguó	Germany
纽约	Niǔyuē	New York
这儿	zhèr	here
挂号	guàhào	to register
特快专递	tèkuài zhuāndì	express mail, special delivery
用	yòng	to use

QUICK TIP

Learning place names in Chinese is a daunting task, there are whole books published for the translation of English place names. Nobody expects you to know the Chinese for every place in the world. At the post office, if you just say the English for the place you want to send your package to you should be alright. It might be a good idea, however, to look up the place name in Chinese before you go. You can go onto Google and use their translation software to translate the name of any place. Write down the name of this destination and carry it with you to the post office. Then, when you are talking with the clerk, you can just substitute "zhèr" for the place name and point at the place you have written down. ("Zhèr" means "here." The whole phrase would be "Wǒ xiǎng bǎ zhège sòngdào zhèr." "I want to send this to here.") Just keep saying "zhèr" and pointing at the words you have written down. Hopefully you have written the Chinese clearly enough for them to understand. Otherwise you might have to trying saying the place name in English.

QUICK TIP 2

Addresses in China are written backwards. That is to say they start with the largest landmark and work down to the most specific details. A sample address would look like this:

Zhōngguó ("China")

Běijīng Shì ("Beijing City"), Hǎidiàn Qū ("Haidian Ward")

Sānyìmiào Běi ("North Sanyimiao") 15 Hàolóu ("Building 15") 12-502

100086

Two things of note: First, the postal code comes last. That's what that six digit number at the end is. Secondly, addresses are often not divided up by street. They sometimes just list the name of the area and then the number of a building. The buildings are not always numbered in a logical fashion either. They may simply be numbered by the order in which they were built. In this example Sānyìmiào is the name of an area, and Sānyìmiào Běi is the name of an apartment complex. (Address systems are different for different cities. Addresses in Shanghai are all done by street.)

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Lesson 39: Weather Watch
明天的天气怎么样？Míngtiān de tiānqì zěnme yàng?

LESSON NOTES

Weather is one of those things that can make or break a trip. The weather is vital information when you are traveling. So it might be nice to be able to ask the locals what they think the weather's going to be like. "Míngtiān de tiānqì zěnme yàng?" means "What will the weather be like tomorrow?" "Míngtiān" means "tomorrow." "Tiānqì" means "weather." "De," the character in between "míngtiān" and "tiānqì," is the possessive particle. It acts kind of like an "apostrophe s." It connects the two words around it and indicates that "tiānqì" "belongs" to "míngtiān." Thus "míngtiān de tiānqì" means "tomorrow's weather." "Zěnme" means "how." "Yàng" means "kind." Together "zěnme yàng" means "what kind." It asks how something was or what something will be like. Putting these two halües of the phrase together we get "Míngtiān de tiānqì zěnme yàng?" which literally means "Tomorrow's weather what kind?" We translate this as "What will the weather be like tomorrow?"

Of course there are many answers you can get. We only have time and space to go over a few of them. The best two answers you can get are "Tiān qíng." and "Tiānqì hěnhǎo." "Tiān qíng." means "Clear skies." "Tiān" means "sky" or "heaven" and "qíng" means "clear." "Tiānqì hěnhǎo." is less specific, it just means "The weather is good." Like we said before, "tiānqì" means "weather." "Hěn" means "very" and "hǎo" means "good." Literally this is "Weather very good."

A disheartening answer would be "Xià yǔ." This literally means "Falling rain." "Xià" means "down" or "to go down," "yǔ" means "rain." Thus "Xià yǔ." together means "It's raining." or, in the case of tomorrow, "It's going to rain." An answer that you're unlikely to get, but we might as well prepare you for just in case, is "Xià xuě." This is the same "xià" as before and "xuě" means "snow," so "Xià xue." means "It's snowing."

Two last weather words that can be used by themselües: "rè" and "lěng." "Rè" means "hot" and "lěng" means "cold."

China is a very large country and the climate varies dramatically depending on where you are. The northernmost part of China (Heilongjiang Province) is considered sub-artic, whereas Hainan Island in the south is tropical. China's weather is dominated by dry and wet seasons, but the specific results of these changes very between regions. We will break China up into a few regions and give the general climate for those regions, but remember, climate can vary a lot with altitude and depending on the lay of the land nearby. That's why we gave you this lesson's phrase. Now it's up to you to use it.

Northeast:

China is dry in the winter and wet in the summer. The Northeast, especially, gets very dry in the winter. (Though not as dry as the Northwest.) Winds kick up, and cuts through any unprotected skin. It is common for Beijing to get down to -20℃ at night. (That's about -5℉.) Heilongjiang gets down to -40℃. For anyone who doesn't know, that's where Celsius and Fahrenheit meet. That's cold. The wind comes in even harder in the spring bringing in dust from the Gobi Desert. Dust storms are becoming less severe and less frequent, but Beijing is still occasionally covered with a nice, thick, brown layer of dust. The summers bring rain (though intermittently) often in the form of all day thunderstorms. The area to the north of Beijing is cooler, but Beijing and the area to it's south often stay around 30℃ all summer. (86℉.) Unfortunately, for some reason the wind mostly disappears during the summer. The air becomes stifling. Generally, autumn is considered the best time to visit the Northeast. In the fall, daytime temperatures range from 20℃ to 30℃ (68℉ to 86℉), but fall steeply at night. The fall skies are clear and the moon is big.

South:

South China is wet. The summers bring monsoons and typhoons with rain almost everyday. When it is not raining the air is sticky and the heat presses down on you. The winters in the South are short, only lasting from January to March. It doesn't get anywhere near as cold as the North, but you had still better bring some warm clothes. Lots of Southerners will tell you that the South is actually colder than the North because there is no heating. All gas heating in China is government controlled. Areas south of the Yangtze do not get gas heating. In the North, Southerners say, it is only cold outside. Inside it is warm. But in the South it is cold both inside and outside. When there is a steady drizzle falling, the areas around Shanghai can feel frigid. That said, if you go far enough south, to Guangzhou or Yunnan for example, the winters can be quite pleasant as long as you bring your hat, some long-sleeved shirts and sweaters for after nightfall. Spring and autumn are generally considered the best times to be in the south. Summer is to be avoided, especially from July to September, the monsoon season.

Northwest:

The Gobi Desert lies in China's Northwest region. The Northwest is extremely dry and gets almost no rain. Summers are terribly hot and winters are as bitterly cold as the rest of the North. Here, as with most other regions, the spring and fall are the best times to visit as the temperature is not at it's extremes. Being the desert, the sun in the Northwest gets very strong, but the huge, blue sky of the Northwest is something not to be missed.

Tibet:

Tibet is harsh. The entire area is at high altitude. Many travelers find it necessary to rest their first day after arriving in Tibet to get used to the lack of oxygen. The sun shines fiercely through the thin air making it hot in the summers. Winter comes early to Tibet (October) and stays until the following May or June. During this time the temperatures fall below freezing and the wind whips through the mountains. Tibet is also very dry. The rainy season comes from June to September, and, coincidentally, this is the best time to see Tibet. Because of the mountains, Tibet's roads are especially susceptible to flooding and snow. The rainy season can cause some problems for moving around Tibet, but it is also when the scenery will be at its best and greenest. The warm temperatures and summer festivals make summer the time to be in Tibet. And did we say you needed sun block for the Northwest? We meant Tibet. Because of the altitude, the sun in Tibet will probably be worse than any you've ever experienced.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
明天的天气怎么样？	Míngtiān de tiānqì zěnme yàng?	What will the weather be like tomorrow?
天气很好。	Tiānqì hěnhǎo.	The weather is good.
天晴。	Tiān qíng.	Clear skies.
下雨。	Xià yǔ.	It's raining.
下雪。	Xià xuě.	It's snowing.
要下雨。	Yào xià yǔ.	It will rain.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
明天	míngtiān	tomorrow
的	de	possessive particle
天气	tiānqì	weather
怎么	zěnme	how
样	yàng	kind, type
很	hěn	very
好	hǎo	good
天	tiān	sky, heaven
晴	qíng	clear
下	xià	down, to go down
雨	yǔ	rain
雪	xuě	snow
热	rè	hot
冷	lěng	cold
要	yào	will

QUICK TIP

In the lesson Michael gave you bare bones phrases for describing the weather. These phrases are the simplest ways to describe the kinds of weather we talked about. Michael also said that they could be used to talk about the weather right now or when describing tomorrow's weather, context will fill you in on what time people were talking about. This is true, but most Chinese people would add one more word when describing tomorrow's weather. This word is "yào" and it means "will." If someone wanted to say "It will rain." they would say "Yào xià yǔ." Literally this is "Will fall rain." If they wanted to say "Tomorrow's weather will be good." they would say, "Míngtiān de tiānqì yào hěnhǎo." "Yào" is always placed before the verb or the adjective phrase. In our first example it preceded the verb "xià." In the second example it precedes the adjectives "hěnhǎo." If we want to say "It will be hot." we say, "Yào rè." You get the idea. The bare bones phrases in the lesson are enough to get your meaning across if the context has been put out, adding "yào" makes the meaning of your sentence clear even if the context is not there. In the lesson Michael first established context by asking about tomorrow's weather. After that's been asked, everyone knows that all comments are about tomorrow and not right now. "Yào" is not necessary. But if no context has been established, "yào" becomes very necessary. Without

saying anything before hand, you could look up at the darkening sky and say, "Yào xià yǔ." ("It will rain.") If you just said "Xià yǔ." it would just mean "It's raining." That wouldn't make any sense if the sky's just getting dark.

QUICK TIP 2

Literally "hěnhǎo" means "very good." "Hěn" means "very" and "hǎo" means "good." You may start to notice, however, that you never see "hǎo" without "hěn." The Chinese never use "hǎo" by itself, they always add "hěn" or some other word that changes the degree of "good"ness. This is because the Chinese usually favor two character adjectives and nouns over monosyllabic ones. They add "hěn" to "hǎo" to make it sound better. "Hěnhǎo" is the most basic configuration of "hǎo" and can be considered to mean just "good."

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Lesson 40: Exchanging Contact Info

请给我你的电话号码。Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànhuà hàomǎ.

LESSON NOTES

You sly dogs. We know the real reason you're taking these lessons is to meet members of the opposite sex. We know all the lessons up till now have just been preludes to this most important of all questions: How do you get somebody's phone number?

In all seriousness, it is really too bad that most foreigners don't get to meet many Chinese people when they are in China. Lots of Chinese people want to make friends with foreigners and many foreigners would find their time in China more enjoyable with a Chinese friend or two. There are two main obstacles in the path of these friendships.

The first is the sheer number of Chinese people. Yes, there are many outgoing, friendly people looking to learn about new cultures and meet kinds of people they have never met before, but there are also lots of people who don't want to deal with the possible communication troubles, who are too busy to make new friends, or who just won't have any particular interest in you. Wading through rivers of people in search of friendly souls can be hopeless and really comes down to luck. The one advantage you have is that people may be keeping an eye out for you as well.

The second barrier is language. Many people would love to be able to hang out with a person from a different culture, but they just don't have the communication skills. In many countries you have visited or will visit the average person speaks at least a little English. China is not like this. The average person knows nothing but "Hello." In order to make Chinese friends you either have to meet Chinese people that speak English (and there are many of these) or you have to speak some Chinese.

SurvivalPhrases.com is here to help you with this second barrier. Perhaps at some point we will start a separate website called SurvivalFriends.com where we network travelers with friendly people, but that hasn't happened yet. Now we are just working on what you can say if you do meet those friendly people.

And if they're really friendly, then you might want to use today's phrases on them.

Today's phrases seem kind of complex. They are a little long, but the structure is very simple.

"Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànhuà hàomǎ." means "Please give me your phone number." "Qǐng" means "please." "Gěi" is "to give." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." Thus "qǐng gěi wǒ" is "please give me." "Nǐ" means "you." "De" is the possessive particle, it makes nouns possessive, so here it turns "you" into "your." "Diànhuà hàomǎ" means "telephone number." "Diànhuà" means "telephone"

and "hàomǎ" means "number." "Nǐ de diànhuà hàomǎ" is "your telephone number." When we combine this with the first half of the phrase we get our original "Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànhuà hàomǎ." As usual, Chinese grammar is very simple. There are no twists when putting together this sentence, there are no rules you have to remember. (Except, perhaps, the usage of "de.")

The kink comes, as it always does in Chinese, with the pronunciation. In the beginning of the phrase we have four third tones in a row. Hopefully you've been reading these lesson write ups and are aware that our rule for dealing with third tones is not very consistent. In this instance we chose to go with the "all second tones until the last third tone" school of thought. Following this rule, we changed "qǐng," "gěi," and "wǒ" into second tones leading up into the third tone "nǐ." Again, it doesn't matter which of our two rules you use, both are just rules of thumb.

We can use the phrase we just mentioned to ask for someone's email address with just a slight modification. Drop "diànhuà hàomǎ" and replace it with "diànzǐ yóuxiāng." This word literally means "electronic mailbox," but it has come to mean "email." Our phrase is now "Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànzǐ yóuxiāng." ("Please give me your email.") All us travelers know that people on the move live off email. As Michael said, email may be way more useful than a phone number, especially if you'll be skipping town soon.

Michael mentioned in the lesson that you can also just say the English "email." Most people who have email are going to know the English word. Not knowing this word is a good indicator that the person you are talking to doesn't have an email address (which is not an unheard of occurrence). You can say to someone "Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de email." or you can add the word "dìzhǐ." "Dìzhǐ" means "address." Our whole phrase then becomes "Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de email dìzhǐ." ("Please give me your email address.")

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请给我你的电话号码。	Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànhuà hàomǎ.	Please give me your phone number.
请给我你的电子邮箱。	Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de diànzǐ yóuxiāng.	Please give me your email.
请给我你的email地址。	Qǐng gěi wǒ nǐ de email dìzhǐ.	Please give me your email address.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please
给	gěi	to give
我	wǒ	I, me
你	nǐ	you
的	de	possessive particle
电话	diànhuà	telephone
号码	hàomǎ	number
电子邮箱	diànzǐ yóuxiāng	e-mail
地址	dìzhǐ	address

QUICK TIP

We said that many Chinese people will be eager to make foreign friends; sometimes it will be surprising just how eager they are. Lots of Chinese people want to meet English partners, people they can practice their English with. For this reason you might find yourself occasionally approached on the street by people who say they want to make friends. (We mentioned this in lesson 32, the How Do You Say? lesson.) These people will sometimes request your phone number or email after only a few introductory sentences. An encounter might go like this:

(On a university campus.)

Young man with glasses: Hello!

You: Um, hi.

YM: What's your name?

You: Um, Michael.

YM: Where are you from?

You: America.

YM: Do you like China?

You: Uh, yeah.

YM: Can I have your phone number?

This is really something that happens, and it is a little hard to know how to respond to it. (This is not to say that there are not many cool, suave people in China. You just probably won't be approached by them.)

If you want to give this person your phone number or email address, by all means do so. But you shouldn't feel bad about saying, "I'm sorry. I usually only give my phone number to people after I get to know them pretty well. Have a nice day."

The person may continue to pursue you at which point you have to say, "I'm sorry, but I'm really very busy. I have to go now." You all are native English speakers, we don't have to tell you how to politely refuse someone's company.

You may also find that people you meet normally in the course of your travels will want your contact information very early on. We are not talking about people that approach you on the street, but rather people you play a game of pick up basketball with, or someone you have a passing conversation with at a food stand; even people that help you figure out where to get off the bus may want your number. It might be a little awkward, but it's perfectly alright to refuse them. Remember you have the excuse that you're a traveler, you can say that you don't have a phone (though this may only prompt them to ask for your email address).

QUICK TIP 2

Speaking of email, electronic communication has become amazingly popular in China. Everyone, children, adults, old people, uses text messaging. People in China also use email a lot, but not nearly as frequently as they chat online. Office workers use online chatting for business as well as pleasure. Young people go to internet cafes to chat for hours with people they may or may not have met in real life. In China it is not uncommon for young people to make friends online. This is done either through online clubs and chat rooms, or through dating and friend-finding sites. Many Chinese people will tell you that the Chinese are very shy (though they will also say they are very friendly). We have already said that many Chinese people get all their friends from school and work, that they don't have many other options for meeting people. Online communities are giving the Chinese a chance to branch out and meet new people. Many Americans see meeting people online as strange, nerdy, and maladjusted. The Chinese see it as fun.

The most popular online messengers in China are a Chinese company called QQ and MSN, Microsoft's messaging service. These are so popular that the word "MSN" has almost replaced the word "email" recently. People will say, "Can I have your MSN?" when they may actually mean "Can I have your email?" (Your ID on MSN is an email address.) You're perfectly welcome to steer clear of these forms of communication, but it's interesting to note their prevalence in Chinese society.

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Lesson 41: Bottled Water Please

请给我一瓶水。Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng shǔi.

LESSON NOTES

Do not drink the tap water in China. It is not drinkable. The locals do not drink it, adventurous travelers do not drink it, nobody drinks it, and neither should you. That is to say, don't drink it straight. We don't want to scare you too much. It is not as if the tap water is pure cyanide and just a drop will kill you. As long as you don't gulp down water straight, you will be okay. Boiled tap water is fine. We are not sure exactly what is wrong with the tap water- some say it's bacteria, some say it's chemicals- but whatever it is, boiling the tap water makes it drinkable. Chinese people boil tap water all the time and use it to make tea. Much of the tea you get in restaurants is probably made using boiled tap water. We don't say this to make you look askance at the tea you are being served, but rather to demonstrate how harmless the tap water is once it's been boiled. Small amounts of un-boiled tap water will also not hurt you. You can use tap water to brush your teeth, you can wash fruit with it. It is not deadly poison. That being said, let us reiterate: don't drink the tap water in China. Most Chinese people have a water cooler in their house. Many people boil water and then put it in the fridge. In restaurants they will serve you bottled water, hot boiled water, or tea. No one ever gets a cool glass of tap water.

You're going to be spending a lot of time outside and China can get very hot. Even Beijing, in the north of China, stays above 30°C almost the entire summer. (30°C is 86°F for all the fahrenheit users out there.) If you don't buy water at some point you will be very thirsty. Don't worry, there will be people all over the place selling water. Little convenience stores, super markets, and magazine stands all sell bottled water. In addition, in any spot where there are a lot of people there are usually other people on the street with styrofoam coolers selling bottled water. You will see these people all over tourist spots. They are also around the train station and will set up near basketball courts or soccer fields. If you need some water just go into a store or up to one of the people selling water on the street and say this lesson's phrase: "Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng shǔi." The phrase means "Please give me one bottle of water." "Qǐng " means "please." "Gěi" means "to give." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." Together these three words give us the phrase "please give me." The last half of the sentence is "yīpíng shǔi." "Yī" means "one." "Píng" is a measure word that means "bottle." "Shǔi" means "water." Together "yīpíng shǔi" is "one bottle of water." Thus our whole phrase is "Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng shǔi." which means "Please give me one bottle of water." Remember that because the beginning of the phrase has three third tones in a row the preceding two third tones become a second tones. Thus "gěi" becomes "géi." Our whole phrase is then pronounced like this: "Qíng géi wǒ yīpíng shǔi." If you say this to a vendor they should know what you want and they'll just tell you how much it costs. (See Quick Tip 1 for a possible problem in the exchange.) Plain water costs about one yuan per bottle in the super market. Outside it shouldn't ever be more than two yuan. Sometimes, if people can tell that you are a tourist, they will try to raise prices on you, but generally they are very honest. There is

still one thing you should watch out for, though even we here at SurvivalPhrases.com are not sure whether this ever really happens. There are stories about vendors on the street who collect empty water bottles and then refill them with tap water. They then sell these refilled bottles as drinkable water. (This should not lead you to look down on the people collecting bottles on the street. Bottles can be sold back for money and so many homeless people and some people who are just frugal collect plastic bottles.) Michael warned you about this in the lesson, but he says it's never happened to him. Nevertheless, you should pay attention every time you open a bottle of water. Make sure the safety seal clicks indicating that it was sealed before you opened it. These stories may be just myths, but woe be to you if you get the bottle that proves the stories are true.

In the lesson we also went over "Bùyào bīngkuài." This means "I don't want ice." "Bù" is "no" and "yào" means "to want" or "to need." Together these two characters can mean "don't," (as in "Don't eat that.") but here they mean "not want." Remember that when "bù" comes before another fourth tone, as is the case here, it becomes "bú." Therefore we say "búyào." "Bīng" means "ice" and "kuài" means "lump," "cube," or "chunk." Thus "bīngkuài" means "ice cube." Together the phrase is literally "not want ice cube." It means "I don't want ice." We don't have to say "I" because it will be assumed that you are talking about yourself.

This phrase, "I don't want ice." was handed down from the SurvivalPhrases.com management. Michael realized later that in many ways it's a silly phrase to learn. In China, the only time you will get ice in your drink is at bars. There you don't have to worry about it. That ice is all store-bought. In fact, all ice in China is store-bought. This worry about ice is an American worry (which is the reason management thought of it and part of the reason Michael didn't realize it was silly). Many Americans take trips to Mexico. The water in Mexico is undrinkable, but only to the Americans who are not used to it. The water is not so bad that locals don't drink it. Mexico is also hot. So the locals make ice which they then put in their drinks. For an American it is very important to remember to drink nothing with ice in it because that ice was probably made from tap water. This is not the case in China. Chinese people do not make ice because they do not drink the tap water. (That, and traditional Chinese medicine says it's bad for your intestines to drink cold things. Many Chinese people will drink hot drinks all year round, though this is changing in the younger generations.) If you encounter ice in China, and, again, this will probably only be in a bar, you can be pretty sure it is okay to drink.

Learning "Bùyào bīngkuài." is not a total waste, though. The phrase "bùyào" is very important. As we said before, it means "to not want." You can replace the word "bīngkuài" with any noun that you don't want. Let's say you don't want hot water ("rèshǔi"). You can say "Bùyào rèshǔi." ("I don't want hot water.") Or, even more useful, if you don't want something that someone is selling you, you can simply say "Bùyào." In tourist spots you will often be accosted by people selling things: trinkets, postcards, Chairman Mao's Collected Sayings, whatever. You can just give these people a firm "Bùyào." In fact, this might become your most used phrase.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请给我一瓶水。	Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng shǔi.	Please give me one bottle of water.
不要冰块。	Bùyào bīngkuài.	I don't want ice.
什么水。	Shénme shǔi.	What kind of drink?
不要热水。	Bùyào rèshǔi.	I don't want hot water.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please
给	gěi	to give
我	wǒ	I, me
一	yī	one
瓶	píng	measure word for bottles
水	shǔi	water, drink
不	bù	no
要	yào	to want, to need
冰	bīng	ice
块	kuài	chunk, cube, lump
矿泉水	kuàngquánshǔi	spring water, mineral water
录茶	lǜchá	green tea
红茶	hóngchá	black tea
可乐	kělè	cola
热	rè	hot

QUICK TIP

The first phrase in today's lesson might get you the water you want. But there might also be some confusion. Chinese people use the word "shǔi" (which literally means "water") to mean any kind of drink. If you say the phrase above ("Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng shǔi."), the response may be "Shénme shǔi?" This literally means "What water?" but the person saying it means "What kind of drink?" (This also makes for some interesting exchanges with Chinese people in English. They will ask (in English), "Do you want to drink water?" If you say yes, they will then ask, "What do you want to drink?" For them, "Do you want to drink water?" meant "Do you want a drink?") To specify that you want water, you may need to say the Chinese word for "spring water" or "mineral water." This is "kuàngquánshǔi." "Kuàng" means "ore" or "mineral" and "quán" means "spring." After they ask you "Shénme shǔi?" you can answer "Kuàngquánshǔi." You could also say from the beginning "Qǐng gěi wǒ yīpíng kuàngquánshǔi." ("Please give me one bottle of spring water.") If you'd rather drink something else, then say one of these: "lǜchá" ("green tea"), "hóngchá" (literally "red tea," but in the West it's often called "black tea," this is usually sweeter than the "lǜ chá"), or "kělè" ("cola").

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Lesson 42: Saying No
不对。Bùduì.

LESSON NOTES

No means no; except when it doesn't (see Quick Tip 2). Today's lesson is a simple review of how to say something is not right or an action is not okay. Chinese people rarely use the word "bù" by itself in response to anything other people say. As we have seen in other lessons, they often combine "bù" with the verb or adjective from the question they are answering. Today's phrases both use "bù." "Bùduì" is used to indicate that something is not correct, there is a problem with logic or the facts are just not right. "Bù xíng" doesn't make a factual judgement, it expresses subjective disapproval.

"Duì" means "correct." Thus "Bùduì." means "Not correct." or "Wrong." When saying this phrase you need to change "bù" into a second tone. "Bù" always becomes a second tone when it precedes a fourth tone. "Bùduì." can be used by itself to contradict another person's statement, or it can be used to talk about the correctness of something else in a sentence. You could say "Tā shuōde bùduì." which means "What she says is wrong." ("Tā" means "he" or "she." "Shuō" means "to speak." "De" is the possesive particle. Here it signifies that you are talking about the things she said. "Shuōde" is really short for "shuōde huà." "Huà" means "speech." "Tā shuōde huà" means "the speech she said.") You can also use "bùduì" in a sentence like: "Zhe4ge jùzi bùduì." This means "This sentence is wrong." ("Zhe4ge" means "this." "Jùzi" means "sentence.")

"Bù xíng." is used to say that an action is not allowed, is impossible, or is morally wrong. "Xíng" means "okay." Saying "Bù xíng." says that something is "Not okay." A guard at an embassy, after being asked if people can enter, may hold up his hand and say "Bù xíng." This means you are not allowed to go in. A man kissing a girl in a public area might stop her and say "Bù xíng." Perhaps he is already late for something, perhaps he feels uncomfortable around so many people, or maybe there's some other reason; either way, "Bù xíng." says that he thinks that what is happening is "not okay."

You can use "bù xíng" as part of a sentence to express disapproval of something. If you say to a friend, "Nǐ zhèyàng bù xíng." it means "It's not okay for you to be like this." or "What you're doing is wrong." ("Nǐ" means "you." "Yàng" means "way" or "kind.") Or your mom might say (if she were Chinese), "Nǐ de yīfu bù xíng." This means "Your clothes are not okay." ("Yīfu" means "clothes.")

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
不对。	Bùduì.	Not correct., Wrong.

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
不行。	Bùxíng.	Not okay.
还行。	Háixíng.	Fine.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
不	bù	no, not
对	duì	correct, right
行	xíng	okay
她	tā	she
他	tā	he
说	shuō	to speak
的	de	possessive particle
话	huà	speech
这个	zhège	this
句子	jùzi	sentence
你	nǐ	you
样	yàng	kind, way
衣服	yīfu	clothes
还	hái	still, yet

QUICK TIP

"Xíng" can be used by itself to indicate agreement with somebody's plan. If someone says they want to go to the zoo or that they're going to leave before you, you can say "Xíng." to indicate that you think that plan is okay. This is probably one of the most common ways of expressing agreement, and is used all the time.

Another common usage of "xíng" is in "háixíng." "Hái" means "still" or "yet." People often use "háixíng" to mean "just okay," "still okay," "fine," or "good enough." Someone who is told that they speak Chinese or paint very well might modestly respond "Háixíng." This means that they are "just okay," but not great. It also contains the implied meaning that they believe they could be better. "Háixíng" is also a common response when somebody asks how someone or something is doing. When asked about their business or little sister someone might answer "Háixíng." This means "fine," things are okay.

QUICK TIP 2

We've touched on this before, but it's worth bringing up again: It is Chinese etiquette to refuse gifts when they are offered, especially spontaneous things, like food. Many people will turn down any offerings you make at least once or twice. You should be prepared to offer a few times and perhaps insist. This will also come up if you are offering to pay for other people. People will refuse to let you pay for even the smallest things, like bus rides. They will force their one yuan fare on you. This can be equally true of taxi fares. Just like Chinese people don't often split

checks, they will also refuse to let you pay for part of the taxi ride. They will probably let you pay only if you are faster than them at pulling out your money. (The taxi driver generally takes the first handful of money that is waved in front of his face.)

When you are giving the cabbie money a companion might yell from the back seat, "Bù xíng! Bù xíng!" She doesn't want you to pay for her. To this you can respond, "Méi shì." ("No problem.") These phrases also work the other way around. When confronted with a gift that is simply too generous, or the fifth time in a row a friend has paid the cab fare, you can complain, "Bù xíng!" It means you can't possibly accept this gift or let them continue paying for cab rides.

Because Chinese etiquette often requires that people politely refuse gifts, Chinese people will insist that you take things they offer you. They will not take no for an answer. They believe you are refusing proffered food, money, etc. out of politeness, and the only way to overcome this is to keep insisting that you take the item until you relent. Most of the time you may find it more convenient to just accept small things (like food) even if you don't particularly want it. (In China there is generally very little understanding of things like vegetarianism, but you might find that they accept and are not surprised by an intolerance of chili peppers.) Take a nibble, smile, and then dispose of it discreetly later. You should beware, though, that because they expect you to refuse, people may sometimes offer you something they don't really want to give you. People who don't have much money may offer to buy you train or plane tickets, pay for dinner, or treat you to other expensive events. In these situations it's important that you refuse the gift at least a few times. You don't want to take something that they didn't expect you to accept. But if they continue to insist, they may just be being very generous. Chinese people put a lot of stock in relationships and friendships. They will go out of their way to do other people favors, and sacrifice much to preserve and strengthen these relationships. Perhaps we shouldn't think this is so weird.

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Lesson 43: English Info Guide
有英语版吗？Yǒu yīngyǔ bǎn ma?

LESSON NOTES

Chinese people always emphasize their country's history. It comes up all the time in everyday speech. A middle-aged man can be heard on the street remarking to a woman, "Well, how do you expect a country with a 5,000 year long history to be so easily brought together?" History and population size are two topics that are always on the tip of everyone's tongue, and used to explain almost any situation in China. Chinese people live in and for their history. Much of the language makes reference to historical events and stories. If you watch any TV or movies you will notice that most television shows and many movies take place at some time in China's past. In fact, most of the television shows that take place in the present day are imported from Korea or Japan (mostly Korea).

If you want to understand China at all you need to come briefed on the history. Knowing the background story for the society you are seeing will make you a lot more open and sensitive to it's differences. Understanding how the Chinese got to where they are is the first step in making sense of the way they live.

This is also important for appreciating the tourist spots you're sure to hit up. Yeah, the Great Wall has a heck of a view and no one needs history to go shopping in Shanghai (though you could probably get the same stuff off the internet), but many of China's great sites don't really make sense until you understand what happened there or how that place came to be. (Though, again, China is not short on natural wonders that require no explaining.) The Forbidden City is just a bunch of red buildings and walls until you've read enough about eunuchs, emperors, and empresses to make it a stage, a lively setting of scintillating and grand stories. (The Forbidden City is one site that perhaps it is almost impossible for a foreigner to enjoy as much as a Chinese person. Being immersed in imperial television dramas and folklore gives a background that you almost certainly can't substitute.) Tian'anmen Square is the world's largest open air meeting place, and was the setting for one of the most important meetings in China's recent history: the Tian'anmen Square Protests in 1989. The site is much more breath-taking when you can imagine today's tourists replaced by thousands of protesters huddled in the square making competing speeches and later listening to machine gun fire come down the streets before tanks rolled in. Peking University probably doesn't mean too much to most Westerners, but it's the most prestigious university in a nation that traditionally puts education above all else. It was a fermentation point for the May 4th and June 4th movements and a place where important figures like Hu Shi and Chen Duxiu gathered and taught. Don't know what we're talking about? Get yourself to Wikipedia.

After Wikipedia it's probably a good idea to get yourself a book about China. It doesn't matter what time period you are interested in, Chinese history goes back 5000 years and we would contend that China has a richer and more complex history than any other country in the world. Read a little, we're sure you'll agree. (How one compares richness of history is up for debate and belies the fact that the previous statement was rather silly.)

But you can't possibly learn everything there is to know. Nor can you remember everything you've learned and reliably put particular sites in context. That's why you may find it very helpful to pick up whatever literature is available at the destinations you choose to visit.

Today's phrase is "Yǒu yīngyǔ bǎn ma?" This means "Do you have an English copy?" "Yǒu" is "to have," "yīngyǔ" means "English," "bǎn" means "edition," and "ma" is that little particle that turns statements into questions. Putting all these together we get "Have English edition?" As usual we don't have to give the sentence a subject (we don't have to say "you") because it should be obvious from context what we are talking about. One thing you do need to pay attention to in this sentence is the change of tones on "yīngyǔ." "Yǔ" becomes a second tone because it precedes the third tone in "bǎn."

If you're more comfortable in another language or just curious, you can ask about another language by simply replacing the word "yīngyǔ" with the word for a different language. "Japanese" is "rìyǔ." If we want to ask for a Japanese version of a guide book (or anything else) we can say "Yǒu rìyǔ bǎn ma?" This substitution works for any language. There is a list of languages in Quick Tip 2 at the end of this write up.

The answer to your question will either be "Yǒu." ("We have one.") or "Méiyǒu." ("We do not have any.") Almost all tourist sites will have some English introduction. At the very least they will have a sign that has both English and Chinese. Though often the English on these signs and pamphlets is confusing (and hilarious).

Only the largest tourist sites have printed materials in many different languages in addition to English, and you may find that Japanese and Korean materials are available more often than Western languages other than English. Many tourist sites will also have tour guides who can be employed for a small (and often negotiable) fee. Though, if you are lucky, you will run into a college student on break who will try their best to explain the significance of the things around you.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
有英语版吗？	Yǒu yīngyǔ bǎn ma?	Do you have an English copy?
有日语版吗？	Yǒu rìyǔ bǎn ma?	Do you have a Japanese copy?
没有。	Méiyǒu.	We/I don't have it.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
有	yǒu	to have

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
英语	yīngyǔ	English
版	bǎn	edition
吗	ma	changes statements into questions
日语	rìyǔ	Japanese
国	guó	country, state
语	yǔ	language

QUICK TIP

We've talked a couple times about how you, as a foreigner, may be approached by Chinese people while walking around China. One type of Chinese person you may run into at tourist spots is young people claiming to be "Mongolian art students." (They are referring to Inner Mongolia, a province in Northern China. They may also say they are from any number of other places, but Mongolia still seems to have the most representatives.) These "students" will ask you if you are interested in art. Do you want to see an exhibit of art they and their classmates have done? Don't pay attention to them and don't go with them. They are not art students and they are probably not from Inner Mongolia. It is just a scam used to sell cheap art to foreigners at an exaggerated price. The pictures they will show you are mass-produced art made by who-knows-who. Buying this art does not help the burgeoning careers of bright-eyed, struggling artists and you will be paying much more than you would in any other part of town. The only people you benefit are the ringleaders who put these operations together. Some of the things they show you will certainly be pretty, but they are by no means unique. Going to a section of town that specializes in art or trinkets will give you access to the exact same paintings at a much reduced price.

QUICK TIP 2

Chinese follows a simple pattern for the naming of many foreign countries: one syllable that sounds like the name of that country in the country's native language followed by the character "guó" ("country" or "state").

Here are some countries that follow this pattern:

Germany: "Déguó"

England: "Yīngguó"

France: "Fǎguó"

Korea: "Hánguó"

Russia: "Éguó"

The Chinese for the national language of these countries just cuts off the "guó" and replaces it with "yǔ" ("language").

German: "Déyǔ"

English: "Yīngyǔ"

French: "Fǎyǔ"

Korean: "Hányǔ"

Russian: "Éyǔ"

Other countries have their name turned into Chinese characters that should mimic the pronunciation of the country in it's native language.

Spain: "Xībānyá"

Portugal: "Pútáoyá"

Italy: "Yìdàlì"

You just add "yǔ" onto the end of these countries' names to say their language.

Spanish: "Xībānyáyǔ"

Portuguese: "Pútáoyáyǔ"

Italian: "Yìdàlìyǔ"

The word for "Arabic" also follows this pattern.

Arabic: "Ālābóyǔ"

Japan is a special case. The Japanese people use Chinese characters. So Chinese just uses the Chinese pronunciation of those characters for Japanese place names.

Japan: "Rìběn"

The word for "Japanese" drops the "běn" and adds "yǔ."

Japanese: "Rìyǔ"

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Lesson 44: Business Etiquette
辛苦了。Xīnkǔ le.

LESSON NOTES

Yes, yes, we know, we know. Business before pleasure. And thus we come to today's phrases. These phrases are intended to grease the wheels of your efficient Chinese business machine. (Yes, that was said tongue-in-cheek.) Really, though, these will make your coworkers smile, even as you're skipping out early.

"Wǒ xiān zǒu le." literally means "I first go." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "Xiān" means "first." "Zǒu" means "to walk" or "to go." "Zǒu" is also often used to mean "to leave." Thus "Wǒ xiān zǒu le." means "I'm leaving first."

The "le" in this sentence is the change-of-situation "le" (as opposed to the past-tense "le"). "Le" here indicates that the situation has changed from its previous configuration. You were all working together, but now you need to go. In some ways this softens the sentence. It indicates that you are leaving because the situation has changed (your coworkers got added work, your wife called) not because you originally planned on leaving before everyone else.

Thus this phrase does not have the harshness of the English "I'm leaving first." In English it sounds kind of gloating or like a demand. In Chinese it is merely a recognition of circumstances outside of anyone's control. In some ways it expresses sympathy with the other people who, through no fault of their own, have to stay longer; or regret that you have to leave your friends, with whom you were having such a great time.

"Xīnkǔ le." is another phrase used in relation to work. "Xīnkǔ" means "hard" or "work hard." It can be used in reference to work, but it can also talk about other kinds of hardships. "Tā de shēnghuǒ hěn xīnkǔ." means "Her life is very hard." ("Tā" means "he" or "she." "De" is the possessive particle. "Shēnghuǒ" means "life." "Hěn" means "very.") "Le" in "Xīnkǔ le." is the past-tense "le." It indicates that "Xīnkǔ le." is referring to the past.

One use of "Xīnkǔ le." is a congratulation on a job well done. If you and another person have been working hard all day, when you finish, as you sit down and wipe the sweat off your brow, you can say, "Xīnkǔ le." and smile. The appropriate response to this is to smile back and also say "Xīnkǔ le." Hopefully you also have cold beers you can clink. This usage is a celebration of a completed job.

A very similar usage is for when talking to someone who has just completed a task that you were not part of, especially when that task benefitted you. Then you say "Xīnkǔ le." to them and it is recognizing and showing appreciation for their hard work. These first two phrase are of great importance when working with other people.

One last usage is in the sense of the other example sentence we gave, "Tā de shēnghuǒ hěn xīnkǔ." When somebody tells you about a particularly hard experience they've had you can show your sympathy by saying, "Xīnkǔ le."

Using these phrases can do a lot towards smoothing out the relationships at work, which, we all know, makes all the difference.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我先走了。	Wǒ xiān zǒu le.	I'm leaving first., I'm leaving now.
辛苦了。	Xīnkǔ le.	That was hard., Good work.
我要走了。	Wǒ yào zǒu le.	I have to go.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
先	xiān	first
走	zǒu	to walk, to go, to leave
了	le	indicates change of situation or past tense
辛苦	xīnkǔ	hard, hard work
她	tā	she
他	tā	he
的	de	possessive particle
生活	shēnghuǒ	life
很	hěn	very
关系	guānxì	relationship, connection
要	yào	going to, have to

QUICK TIP

Speaking of relationships: It's not what you know, but who you know. If this phrase originates in the West, it is doubly true in China. Few business deals, from finding good jobs, to sales, to taking out a loan, happen without some sort of "guānxì." "Guānxì" means "relationship" or "connection." In the West everything is based on rules. Our government and society is based on a social contract between people and with the government. If the contract is broken there are certain stipulated penalties. It's not actually as simple as all this, but the social contract is the basis.

China is based on relationships. For a long time the most sacred part of political and social doctrine was the "four bonds" emphasized by Confucian philosophers. These dictated the relationship of superiority and inferiority between father and son, emperor and minister, husband and wife, and son and mother. (There is debate as to how much the last hierarchy actually worked out in real life. Mothers tend to be pretty influential on their sons no matter what culture

you are in.) Within these hierarchies the superior party could do whatever he wanted to the inferiors. People's lives were based on trying to fill their spots within these relationships, not play by some set of all-encompassing rules.

An old and famous Confucian story tells of Confucius' visit to a king. The king wanted to tell Confucius how morally upright the people in his kingdom were. "Look," he said, "a man committed a crime, but his son is such a good person that he reported on his father."

"Where I come from," Confucius replied, "good people do not betray their fathers."

This demonstrates the importance of relationships in traditional society, they completely override any other rules within the society.

This use of relationships still plays a large part in Chinese society. Chinese people will spend inordinate amounts of time doing favors for friends. Requesting and doing favors is a normal and important part of friendship.

Also, whenever Chinese people need to do anything, they will immediately turn to their guanxi. A person who wants to take out a small loan will not call up banks directly, they will not trust the system to give them what they want. Rather they will try to figure out if they or any of their friends have any connections to a bank. Perhaps a friend works at a bank. They are many, many more times more comfortable having their friend help them get a loan than they are approaching the bank as a stranger.

The prominent roles of relationships in Chinese society is important to remember when you are doing business in China.

QUICK TIP 2

The phrase "Wǒ xiān zǒu le." is not appropriate for exiting a conversation. It is used to leave a group when everyone is concerned with their own matters (like at work). It brings attention to your leaving, but it is just a passing matter. If you need to excuse yourself from a more intimate setting, talking with one other person perhaps, or a very small group, it is better to say, "Wǒ yào zǒu le." This means "I have to go." "Yào" means "going to" or "have to." This phrase tells the people you are talking with that you have other things you must attend to, that you have to leave now. It's also nice to add "bùhǎo yìsī" ("sorry") in front of it.

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Lesson 45: I am a Vegetarian.
我是素食主义。Wǒ shì sùshízhǔyì.

LESSON NOTES

We're sure some of you out there are vegetarians. While most people don't need to know the phrases in this lesson, they would seem to be very useful for those of us out there who don't eat meat. In fact, generally these phrases are not useful. We thought it would be a good idea to teach them to you. They might help you keep up the good fight and advance the vegetarian cause, but you may also find that they don't effect very much the composition of the food you are served.

Vegetarianism in China is very rare. Generally it is limited to devout followers of Buddhism (thus one of today's phrases). All other people are expected to eat meat. The idea of not eating meat at all because of personal beliefs not connected with Buddhism just doesn't exist in most of Chinese society. Just as most Chinese people have never met a foreigner, they've also never met a vegetarian. They might know people who don't like to eat a lot of meat or don't like very fatty meat, but they don't know anyone who steadfastly refuses to eat meat. Thus your iron rule against meat may be met with confusion. They will treat you like they treat their friends who don't like meat: "This only has a little meat, try it." "This is fish, it tastes different. You'll like it." While Chinese people have traditionally cooked many dishes without meat (meat was long considered a luxury and was usually unavailable to most people) you may find that much of the food you get in restaurants has meat in it; possibly because of this view of meat as a luxury. Tofu is often flavored with pork. (As a side note, this may make tofu more appealing to people who would never normally eat it in their home country. You really should try some. We Westerners just don't understand how to cook tofu.) Greens have dried fish layered on top of them, ground meat mixed in, or are fried in pig grease. Every Chinese menu has a vegetable section, usually at the back of the menu just before drinks, but just because the dish has vegetables doesn't mean it's absolutely meat free. Many very good vegetarians just give up on trying to keep up their habits in China. While they don't intentionally order meat they accept that it's going to get into their digestive tract sometimes and it's not their fault for not wanting to live solely on McDonald's french fries. Some even try meat dishes occasionally. Hey, your time in China is limited, you might want to see what's out there.

Hopefully, though, today's phrases will help you keep yourself more meat free.

The most basic phrase is: "Wǒ shì sùshízhǔyì." This means "I am vegetarian." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "Shì" is "to be." "Sù" means "vegetable." "Shí" means "to eat" or "food." "Zhǔyì" means "-ism." "Zhǔyì" is put after many words to talk about different schools of thought. "Zīběn" means "capital" (as in money). "Zīběnzhǔyì" means "capitalism." "Gòngchǎnzhǔyì" is "communism."

("Gòngchǎn" can be loosely translated as "sharing products.") Thus "sùshízhǔyì" literally means "eating vegetables-ism" which makes it the word for "vegetarianism." (Or, in our sentence, "vegetarian.")

You may pronounce this phrase perfectly, clearly saying "I am vegetarian." and the restaurant staff might still look at you confused. It's possible they've never even heard this word before. It's like you talking about the national pledge of allegiance in schools and someone saying, "I'm antidisestablishmentarian." (Bonus points to anyone who understands this.) The wait staff in the restaurant may have heard the word "sùshízhǔyì" before, but they don't necessarily know exactly what it entails.

The first step in clearing this up is to add a second sentence explaining your beliefs: "Wǒ bù chī ròu." ("I don't eat meat.") "Wǒ" is "I" or "me." "Bù" means "no." "Chī" is "to eat." "Ròu" means "meat." This is pretty straightforward, but as we explained before, the full force of your meaning may still not be clear. They may believe that you are saying that you just don't like meat and they will still treat your belief as a preference and not a hard, fast rule.

The next thing you may want to try is to put your view in a Chinese context. You can say, "Wǒ shì fǒjiào." ("I am Buddhist.") "Fǒjiào" means "Buddhism." Very devout Buddhists (usually monks and nuns) do not eat any meat at all. Buddhism has a long history in China and the Chinese understand its precepts (to varying degrees). They will be used to the idea that Buddhists cannot eat meat. But devout Buddhists also do not eat eggs, hot pepper, garlic, onions, or generally anything strong-tasting. They do this to keep from stimulating their senses. The wait staff may find it very strange when you say you are Buddhist and then order a stir-fried spinach with garlic and a spicy tofu.

As we mentioned, tofu in China is often flavored with meat. That spicy tofu you order may come with a generous helping of ground pork. We at SurvivalPhrases.com think that tofu is actually quite delicious with pork, but you might not agree. In this case you'll want to use today's last phrase: "Kěyǐ bùfàng ròu ma?" ("Can you not add meat?") "Kěyǐ" means "can" or "to be allowed to." "Fàng" means "to put." "Ma" makes the statement a question. The sentence is literally "Can no put meat?" There are two points to pay attention to for pronunciation. First, the "kě" in "kěyǐ" is pronounced as a second tone because it precedes a third tone. Then the "bù" is changed to second tone as well because it comes before a fourth tone. This sentence is the clearest direction you can give the staff. If you speak clearly there should be no problem and you should get a meatless dish. But Chinese restaurants are not always particularly well organized (though this issue is certainly not limited to Chinese restaurants alone). You may find yourself confronted with the meat that you specifically asked not to have. If this happens, you generally only have to call over your server and they will recognize the mistake and rush to get you a new order, yelling things at the cooks from across the restaurant.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我是素食主义。	Wǒ shì sùshízhǔyì.	I am vegetarian.
我不吃肉。	Wǒ bù chī ròu.	I don't eat meat.
我是佛教。	Wǒ shì fǒjiào.	I am Buddhist.
可以不放肉吗？	Kěyǐ bùfàng ròu ma?	Can you not add meat?

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
是	shì	to be
素食主义	sùshízhǔyì	vegetarianism
不	bù	no
吃	chī	to eat
肉	ròu	meat
佛教	fójiào	Buddhism
可以	kěyǐ	can, to be allowed to
放	fàng	to put
资本主义	zīběnzhǔyì	capitalism
共产主义	gòngchǎnzhǔyì	communism
斤	jīn	traditional Chinese unit of weight (500g)
猪肉	zhūròu	pork
牛肉	niúròu	beef
鸡肉	jīròu	chicken
羊肉	yángròu	mutton

QUICK TIP

This tip is not just for vegetarians: China has a lot of wonderful fruit available cheaply from stands all over the place. If you see someone selling fruit just go over and point at what you want. Be sure to ask "Duōshǎo qián?" ("How much does it cost?") The vendor will tell you the price per jin. All fruit is sold by weight. Some big supermarkets will prepackage fruit and have a price per package, but otherwise it's always done by weight. (Interestingly, this is true for eggs, too.) The fruit sold on the street is often better and cheaper than the fruit in the supermarkets. The vendor will say something to you like "Wǔ kuài yī jīn." This means "Five yuan per jin." ("Wǔ" is "five," "kuài" is the casual word for the yuan, and "yī" is "one.") The jin is a traditional unit of weight in China. In modern China it has been standardized as 500 grams. While China generally uses metric measurements for most things, all food is still sold by the jin. The scales, however, only have grams and kilograms on them. You may then notice that the vendor points to a scale reading 1.5 kilograms and says, "Sān jīn." ("Three jin.") Vendors will punch twice the price they have told you into their electric scales, because the scale only calculates price in kilograms.

The use of pesticides in China is much less regulated than it is in the West, so before you eat any fruit in China you must wash it. How much you wash it is up to you. Some people just give fruit a quick rinse, some will scrub every individual cherry.

QUICK TIP 2

Some people, usually for of religious reasons, may not eat certain kinds of meat. This is not a new concept for some Chinese people. There are substantial Hui and Uighur populations in the northwest and in Beijing. Both these races are traditionally Muslim and thus do not eat pork. Some Chinese people will be familiar with this practice and will understand if you say, "Wǒ bù chī zhūròu." ("I don't eat pork." "Zhū" means "pig.")

The way to say any kind of meat in Chinese is to just say the name of the animal followed by "ròu." Some examples are:

"Zhūròu" ("Pork")

"Niúròu" ("Beef")

"Jīròu" ("Chicken")

"Yángròu" ("Mutton")

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Lesson 46: Help!
救命啊！Jiù mìng ā!

LESSON NOTES

Make sure you pay attention to your belongings at all times. As a traveler you are more vulnerable to theft than the average Chinese person. First, you have no home, no people to help you, and are not fluent in the language. If you do lose something you may find it causes you much more inconvenience than it would at home. Second, people will often be able to pick you out as a traveler. Travelers are more likely to have money and valuable things (such as cameras) and thus will be targeted by thieves.

Today's phrases are to help you if you get into a situation where you need help immediately. Except for one, these phrases are not just for encountering thieves, but can be used in many different kinds of emergencies. You will almost certainly never have to use them, but it is probably best to pay special attention to practicing these phrases because, if you do need them, it is necessary that you be able to think of them quickly.

"Jiǜ mìng ā!" literally means "Save life!" "Jiǜ" means "to save," "mìng" means "life." "Ā" is added to the end to emphasize the urgency of what you are saying. Chinese people often add sounds onto the ends of their speech to emphasize certain feelings or tones. This phrase can be used in any emergency from your friend falling into a river to being confronted by a thief. "Jiǜ mìng ā!" means "Help!" and should be screamed at the top of your lungs. Anytime when it is not appropriate to scream, it is also not appropriate to say "Jiǜ mìng ā!" (Like if you are lost and need help finding your way or if a box is too heavy to lift. Unless that box is about to crush you.)

The next phrase is actually just one word: "xiǎotōu." "Xiǎo" means "little" and "tōu" means "to steal." "Xiǎotōu" is a noun meaning "thief." It refers to people who steal things through sneakiness. This does not include corporate criminals or muggers, people who uses force to steal. Muggers are very, very uncommon in China. Most theft occurs by way of trickery and quickness.

The third phrase is also one word: "jǐngchá." "Jǐng" means "vigilant" and "chá" means "to examine." Together they mean "police." Both this and the previous word can be shouted by themselves in emergencies.

The last phrase is "Qǐng dǎ yāoyāolíng." This means "Please dial 110." "Qǐng" means "please." "Dǎ" literally means "to hit," but it is the verb used in "dǎ diànhuà" ("to make a phone call"). 110 is the number for the police. We discussed this in a previous write up, but it's worth mentioning again (especially since Michael made note of it): When talking about something's number, as in a phone number or the number of a bus, we use "yāo" for "one" instead of "yī." This is to prevent

confusion stemming from the similarity between "yī" and "qī" ("seven"). When saying this phrase you should remember to pronounce "qǐng" as a second tone because it precedes another third tone. Though perhaps this will not be your most pressing concern at the time.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
救命啊！	Jiù mìng ā!	Help!
请打一一零。	Qǐng dǎ yāoyāolíng.	Please dial 110.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
救	jiù	to save
命	mìng	life
啊	ā	(adds urgency and emphasis to the phrase)
小偷	xiǎotōu	thief
警察	jǐngchá	police
请	qǐng	please
打	dǎ	to hit, to dial

QUICK TIP

China is a very safe country. Very, very safe. Much safer than many Western countries. Many Chinese people are very concerned if they or someone close to them is going to America. The rate of violent crime is much higher in the US than it is in China and movies and television have not helped America's image in this aspect. (It is interesting to note that Chinese movies and television deal with violence and modern crime far less than American movies.) Michael tells the story of a young man he met his first time in China. The young man had heard Michael was from New York and told Michael that his girlfriend was going to New York to study. "Is she going to be safe?" he asked. "Is it true everyone there has guns?"

You may occasionally see violence in China. Fights are not totally uncommon, but almost all of these are because of anger, not because of any planned out criminal activity. It is extremely unlikely that you will ever be the target of violence. One reason for this is that the punishments for harming foreigners are much stricter than if the victim had been Chinese. The real danger in China is small-time thieves.

QUICK TIP 2

Keeping your wallet in your back pocket or in the outside pocket of a bag is not the safest place for it. Michael says he has traveled all over with his wallet in his back pocket and never lost it, but he also reports that there have been two times that people have attempted to pick his pocket, but he has noticed before they could succeed. Putting your wallet in your front pocket is much safer. It is most safe to carry some sort of traveler's pouch, something that you tuck into your pants or keep under your shirt.

As with anywhere, some places are more likely to have thieves than other places. On the bus and at the train station are the two most dangerous places for your belongings. In these places the crush of people can make it hard to discern when somebody is prying your wallet from your pocket and when they are just trying to get past. Even Michael puts his wallet in his front pocket when he goes to the train station, and all his Chinese friends do the same. Many Chinese people will wear their backpacks on their chests when going through the train station so they can keep an eye on the pockets. The confusion and mass of people makes it hard to keep track of your stuff and it also makes the station hard to police. People can grab other people's bags and be off before anyone can do anything about it. Any place where there are lots of people all moving around in a disorganized fashion should be considered somewhat unsafe. Especially places like shopping streets and outside malls, where people are likely to have extra cash.

Certain areas of China also have reputations for being more dangerous. Guangzhou is generally considered crime-ridden, though many people who live there or who have lived there say it's not bad if you know how to take care of yourself. New Yorkers have often said the same of their hometown. Beijing is considered safe because it is the seat of the government. In China the ability of the government to control the populace really diminishes the farther you get away from Beijing, though Shanghai is also considered very safe. Drug use and small time crime are much more prevalent the farther you get from Beijing. Many smaller cities are less well policed and more poor and thus are more likely to have pick pockets and thieves. A friend from Xinjiang (in the northwest) laughed at Michael as he walked around with her bag hanging over his lower back. "At home we would never do that," she said. Drug use is most common in the northwest (near Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Inner Asia) and in the southwest (near Burma and Laos). The very isolated mountains between Tibet and Sichuan (in the west-center of China) are considered extremely unsafe because it is impossible to police them as they are huge and there are no people living there. Driving through these mountains you run the risk of running into bandits, which is one of the few instances where you might be exposed to violence.

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Lesson 47: Medical Assistance
请送我到医院。Qǐng sòng wǒ dào yīyuàn.

LESSON NOTES

Last lesson was about emergencies, but we mostly focused on crime. Today we're talking about medical emergencies. The most important part of today's lesson is probably the emergency numbers (listed in Quick Tip 1) but memorizing today's phrases might be very helpful, or possibly life-saving.

"Qǐng jiào jiùhùchē." means "Please call an ambulance." "Qǐng" means "please." "Jiào" means "to call" as in "Call him over." or "She calls me her big brother." "Jiù" means "to save," "hù" means "to protect," together they mean "to give first aid." When combined with "chē" ("car") the word becomes "ambulance" ("first aid car"). Thus our whole sentence is "Please call an ambulance."

The next phrase is for when your medical condition is not quite so urgent that you need an ambulance; often a cab will do just fine. In this case say to the cabbie, "Qǐng sòng wǒ dào bìngyuàn." "Sòng" means "to give" or "to deliver." It also means "to escort" or "to see somebody off." Here it is probably best translated as "to take." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "Qǐng sòng wǒ" literally means "please deliver me," but it can be translated as "please take me." "Dào" means "to arrive," but, as we've noted before, it can often be translated as "to." "Bìng" means "illness" and "yuàn" denotes a certain area, thus "bìngyuàn" means "hospital." Our whole sentence is then: "Qǐng sòng wǒ dào bìngyuàn." which means "Please take me to the hospital." This might also be a good thing to say to a Chinese friend (if you have to go to the hospital). A trip to the hospital is a lot easier to deal with if you have someone accompanying you, and a trip to a Chinese hospital is much easier if you have a Chinese person accompanying you. Don't feel bad about asking this favor. As we've said, Chinese people put a lot of stock in friendships and think nothing of doing favors. They believe that favors are just another part of being friends. (On second thought, their attitude towards favors may make them seem somewhat ungrateful when they ask favors of you. They think it's no big deal.) Chinese people consider going to the hospital alone a pitiable condition, it means you have no friends.

We should point out something that is not quite right with the previous sentence, and hopefully Michael will post this on the site. While the word "bìng4yuàn" is not wrong, it does mean "hospital," it usually refers to a specialized hospital. A much more common word for "hospital" is "yīyuàn." "Yī" means "doctor" or "medicine." Michael's excuse for this mistake is that he was in Japan when the recordings were made. "Hospital" in Japanese uses the Chinese characters for "bìngyuàn."

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请叫救护车。	Qǐng jiào jiùhùchē.	Please call an ambulance.
请送我到医院。	Qǐng sòng wǒ dào yīyuàn.	Please take me to the hospital.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please
叫	jiào	to call
救护车	jiùhùchē	ambulance
送	sòng	to give, to deliver
我	wǒ	I, me
到	dào	to arrive, to
病院	bìngyuàn	specialized hospital
医院	yīyuàn	hospital

QUICK TIP

There are a few different emergency numbers in China and they apply to different types of emergencies.

Police: 110

Fire: 119

Medical: 120

Traffic Accidents: 122

Now that the Olympics is coming, Beijing has simplified its system. You can call 110 for any kind of emergency and they will connect you to the proper department. It is still encouraged that you use the specialized numbers when possible to reduce stress on 110. At the present Beijing only has 16 lines for 110 and this can result in delays (nobody likes to wait on hold when they're bleeding from the head.) The city government says it plans to increase this number to 30 lines by July, 2008.

All other cities still use different numbers for different kinds of emergencies. It's probably a good idea to write these numbers down and keep them on you, though any guide book you bring with you will probably have the numbers in it.

QUICK TIP 2

There are some private medical practices in China, mostly in the countryside, but these people are rarely certified medical professionals. Private practitioners are usually just people with some medical knowledge who provide cheap care. Thus some poor people opt for their services. You should go to a hospital.

The quality of hospital care in China varies to an extreme degree. The US embassy's website gives a terrifying review of Chinese hospitals. But it should be noted that that was filed in 2001 and it is certainly not the norm. You can get good quality medical care in Chinese cities, but you have to pay for it. Some hospitals are of higher quality than others, some have special VIP wards. (Good medical care is ridiculously expensive by Chinese standards, but it's cheaper than uninsured medical care in the West.) Standard medical care is only sparsely available in rural areas. Within cities you will be automatically directed to the best hospitals because you are a foreigner. The Chinese government is aware of the poor conditions in many of its hospitals and does its best to keep foreigners out of these places. If you go to a normal hospital by yourself no one will stop you from entering, but a cabbie or an ambulance will only take you to the best hospitals, the ones approved for foreigner use.

Normal hospitals in cities are not actually all that bad. They may be a little dirty, you may notice a couple blood stains that you feel should be cleaned up, but if you are going for something minor (the flu, a stomach infection, an infected cut) you probably don't have much to worry about. Normal hospitals are also very cheap. Getting yourself checked out by a doctor costs something in the range of 20 yuan. But, if you are doing something that's going to involve a lot of blood, you probably want a high class hospital. In addition to more sanitary medical care, more expensive hospitals will also probably have people there who speak English. You will not find that in your average hospital.

Even in a very good hospital you should make sure they are using new disposable needles and razor blades. If there is any question about this, tell them that you will pay the cost for a new needle or blade. (They shouldn't be more than 10 yuan each.) The most common complaints about Chinese hospitals, other than the pools of blood lying around, are that they often reuse needles, razor blades, and gloves. You probably have enough money that you can prevent them from using contaminated instruments.

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Lesson 48: Explaining Symptoms I
药店在哪儿？Yàodiàn zài nǎr?

LESSON NOTES

For health's minor ups and downs there is the pharmacy. You're much more likely to require the pharmacy's services than the hospital's. To locate a pharmacy use today's phrase "Yàodiàn zài nǎr?" This is a new use of our time-honored "zài nǎr" construction. "Zài" means "at" and "nǎr" means "where." "Yàodiàn" means "pharmacy." "Yào" means "medicine" and "diàn" means "store," so "yàodiàn" is literally "medicine store." Altogether our phrase means "Where is a pharmacy?"

Once you find a pharmacy you may notice that it is split into two sections, one for Western medicine, and one for Chinese medicine. The Chinese medicine section is generally larger. Chinese people believe very strongly in the effectiveness of Chinese medicine. (It should be noted that they're not alone. Many people all over the world tout the benefits of Chinese medicine.) When challenged on this front Chinese people will tell you that Western medicine is stronger and thus more immediately effective, but it also harms your body. Chinese medicine, they say, works with your body, strengthening it and making you all around more healthy. Western medicine just gets rid of your current ailment with no thought to your future well-being. Thus Western medicine is necessary sometimes for life-threatening conditions or when you need quick relief, but in general Chinese medicine is better for you.

Interestingly, many pharmacists will decline to give their customers Western medicine if the customer says they have never taken Western medicine before. They are afraid the shock to the customer's system will be too great. Hospitals in China prescribe Chinese medicine (usually in conjunction with Western medicine). Some doctors will suggest Chinese medicine even in very serious circumstances. A female friend of Michael's told him that she was being given a Chinese medical regimen to treat a swollen mammary gland. The doctors told her that Chinese medicine is more advanced in this area than Western medicine. (It should be noted that many of the most ostentatious claims about Chinese medicine are made by practitioners at private hospitals, places notorious for trying to scam the nervous and ill-educated. Most people stick to the original argument we mentioned, that Chinese medicine improves your over all health, not that it is more effective.)

So does Chinese medicine work? Maybe. Probably at least sometimes. But you should stick to Western medicine, because then at least you know how to take it. Chinese medicine also has lots of complicated rules about when to take it and what other medicines should be taken with it. For example, some medicines are just for summer ailments, some are for certain kinds of coughs, but not others. Do not take Chinese medicines that your Chinese friends may suggest. They are unlikely to hurt you, but you will probably end up drinking all sorts of bitter things with no

effect. If you do take Chinese medicine it should be because a doctor prescribed it to you (a real doctor, not a quack at a private hospital). And in that case you should have someone on hand who can understand exactly the doctor's instructions as to how the medicine should be taken.

"Chinese medicine" in Chinese is "zhōngyào." "Zhōng" means "middle" and is often used to mean "China" as China is "Zhōngguó" ("Middle country"). Michael said in the lesson that "Western medicine" is "xīfāngyào," but actually most people just say "xīyào." "Xī" means "west." ("Xīfāng" means "the West.") If you go to a pharmacy, and you plan to buy Western medicine, you are going to need to ask where the Western medicine is (as everything will be in Chinese). To do this you just say "Xīyào zài nǎr?" This is the same structure as our previous sentence, a noun and then "zài nǎr." The sentence means "Where is the Western medicine?"

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
药店在哪儿？	Yàodiàn zài nǎr?	Where is a pharmacy?
西药在哪儿？	Xīyào zài nǎr?	Where is the Western medicine?

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
药店	yàodiàn	pharmacy
在	zài	at
哪儿	nǎr	where
西药	xīyào	Western medicine
中药	zhōngyào	Chinese medicine
这边	zhèbian	here, around here
那边	nàbian	over there
左边	zuóbian	on the left
右边	yòubian	on the right

QUICK TIP

On second thought, it would be best if you could avoid going to the pharmacy altogether. China's regulation of food and drugs is not very consistent and fake medicine is a reasonably large problem in China. Saying the medicine is fake does not mean it will harm you, we are not talking about accidentally ingesting poison, it's just that the medicine may have no effect. Fake means it just doesn't work. It's most likely that if you buy medicine in China it will be real. If you do have to go to the pharmacy, there's no reason to think twice about it, but it's probably easier if you just bring medicine with you to China. (Some suggestions: anti-diarrheal medication and decongestant.) Medicine you bring with you is of a guaranteed standard and plus the directions for use are not in Chinese.

QUICK TIP 2

When you do ask, "Yàodiàn zài nǎr?" one answer you will very likely get is "Nàbian." "Nàbian" means "over there." "Nà" means "that," but it is part of "nàr" which means "there." "Bian" has no tone in this usage. "Bian" can be used as the suffix for a noun of locality. That's what the dictionary said. We don't really understand it either. Maybe the dictionary is so unclear because it's a concept that is hard to put into words and has to be explained using examples. The aforementioned "nàbian" indicates a general area "over there." If you said "zhèbian" ("zhè" means "this" and is used in "zhèr" which means "here") you would be indicating the area around you, "around here." "Zuóbian" means "on the left." "Yòubian" means "on the right." ("Zuó" means "left" and "yòu" means "right.") "Bian" can be attached to any word indicating direction or placement and it makes a noun representing a general area. "Dōngbian" means "the east." "Wàibian" means "outside."

Upon entering a pharmacy you may ask, "Xīyào zài nǎr?" The clerk will gesture with their hand and say, "Nàbian." or "Zuóbian."

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A Little Bit of Language Can Go a Long Way!

Lesson 49: Explaining Symptoms II
我肚子疼。Wǒ dùzi téng.

LESSON NOTES

Nobody likes a whiner. Are you hot? Well, that's great. We all are. You telling us that you're hot isn't making us any cooler. Sometimes, though, it's necessary to complain, to tell people what wrong with you. Let's say you've been throwing up for the last hour and a half and now you've gone to the hospital (this lesson's starting off on the gross foot already). It would be nice to be able to let the doctor know that your stomach hurts without having to wait until you actually vomit on his or her shoes. Or what if you have diarrhea and you go to the pharmacy? If your throat hurts or you're sneezing a lot, perhaps you can think of clever bits of sign language to communicate these ailments to the pharmacist. But diarrhea is something you'd rather be able to say in a low voice and be done with the whole matter.

The first thing we're going over is how to tell someone what part of you hurts. If you're bleeding or have a huge bruise, all you have to do is point and make a sad face, but sprains are rarely obvious at first glance and a headache, stomachache, or toothache never is. We'll start with the stomach. "Wǒ dùzi téng." means "My stomach hurts." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me," dùzi" means "stomach," and "téng" is "to hurt." Notice that we don't need "de" the possessive particle here. When talking about parts of one's body adding "de" is unnecessary, though it is not be wrong to add it. If we wanted, we could also make this sentence even simpler and get rid of "wǒ." If you say, "Dùzi téng." it should be obvious who's stomach you are talking about. Whether or not you use "wǒ" is up to you.

If you want to talk about another part of the body, just replace "dùzi" in the previous sentence. "Tóu" means "head." "Wǒ tóu téng." means "My head hurts." "Wǒ yáchǐ téng." means "My tooth hurts." ("Yáchǐ" is "tooth.") "Wǒ sǎngzi téng." means "My throat hurts." ("Sǎngzi" means "throat.") We can't possibly teach you the name for every part of the body, and you wouldn't be able to remember them anyway, so, as a backup, you can just say, "Zhèr téng." "Zhèr" means "here." Saying "Zhèr téng." means "It hurts here." Obviously you need to point to the area that hurts when you say this, but this can replace learning a lot of other words. You can also say, "Wǒ zhèr téng." if you want.

Another non-obvious symptom is a fever. "Wǒ fāshāo le." means "I have a fever." "Fā" means "to send out." "Shāo" is a noun which means "fever." (It can also be used as a verb meaning "to roast" or "to burn.") These two put together could be translated as "the fever is coming out," but it's probably best not to think about it, just remember that "shāo" uses the verb "fā." (This happens occasionally with "fā." It is paired with nouns in a way that doesn't translate well into English.) "Le" here is the change-of-situation "le." It indicates that you having a fever is a new occurrence. If you've had a fever for quite some time now then you don't have to use "le."

We saved the best for last: diarrhea. This is the greatest wrench in anyone's China travel plans. You should expect it and plan for it. We're not saying that everyday will be intestinal hell, but you're probably going to have to ward off one or two attacks to your digestive tract. The interesting thing is that you are not alone. It is not just because you are a Westerner that you may have stomach troubles in China. It seems that Chinese people often do, too. Perhaps it is the hot pepper and oil in the food, or maybe Chinese restaurants are not very sanitary, or possibly there is just too much drinking (we'll be getting to that), but Chinese people seem to often get mild diarrhea and they are not ashamed to talk about it. We're not sure if it is because it is such a common occurrence that people are so open about it, but one's doings in the bathroom are frequently the topic of passing conversation and remarks in any kind of setting (yes, even at the dinner table, as Michael mentioned). This is not to say that these things are talked about in detail, but they are mentioned casually, just like any other ailment that might restrict what you can do (like your foot hurting).

The Chinese word for diarrhea is "lā dùzi." This literally means "pull stomach." "Lā" means "to pull" and "dùzi" is "stomach." This is actually a euphemism. The technical way to say "diarrhea" is "xièdù," but nobody says this (perhaps it is too descriptive). Make no mistake though, "lā dùzi" does not beat around the bush. It means "diarrhea," as opposed to other more vague sayings like "Wǒ dùzi téng." and "Wǒ dùzi bù shūfu." ("My stomach is uncomfortable." "Bù" means "no" and "shūfu" means "comfortable.") The phrase you can use with the pharmacist is "Wǒ lā dùzi le." ("I have diarrhea.") The "le" here is again the change-of-situation "le." We are not expecting you to say this freely amongst other people, but we don't want you to be surprised if they ask. They are just making what they feel is a totally normal inquiry about your health, and the information may be pertinent if you are traveling together. (Perhaps you'd like to call it a day and have a little quality time with your porcelain friend back at the hotel.)

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我肚子疼。	Wǒ dùzi téng.	My stomach hurts.
我头疼。	Wǒ tóu téng.	My head hurts.
这儿疼。	Zhèr téng.	It hurts here.
我发烧了。	Wǒ fāshāo le.	I have a fever.
我拉肚子了。	Wǒ lā dùzi le.	I have diarrhea.
我喝醉了。	Wǒ hēzuì le.	I am drunk.
我要吐了。	Wǒ yào tù le.	I am going to vomit.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
肚子	dùzi	stomach
疼	téng	to hurt
头	tóu	head
牙齿	yáchǐ	tooth
嗓子	sǎngzi	throat
这儿	zhèr	here

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
发	fā	to send out
烧	shāo	fever, to roast, to burn
了	le	indicates change of situation
拉	lā	to pull
不	bù	no
舒服	shūfu	comfortable
喝	hē	to drink
醉	zuì	drunk
要	yào	going to, have to
吐	tù	to vomit

QUICK TIP

While we're talking about manners and feeling ill, we might as well put in something about alcohol. Believe us, this has more to do with getting sick then you may think.

The Chinese drinking style is different than that in the West (or at least in America). To begin with, Chinese does not really have a word for tipsy. "Drunk" in Chinese is "zuì." "Wǒ hēzuì le." or "Wǒ zuì le." means "I am drunk." (Literally "I drink drunk." or "I drunk." "Hē" means "to drink." The "le" is the change-of-situation "le.") But "zuì" does not cover the wide range of feelings that the English "drunk" does. "Drunk" in English can be anywhere from a little red-faced to feeling extra boisterous to not knowing how to get home. The Chinese "zuì" just applies to the latter end of the spectrum. "Zuì" means you're feeling kind of dizzy, you might need to sit down for a while, you can't be held responsible for your actions, and you might need to find a bathroom soon. There is not a good Chinese word for the states in between the time when you start drinking and you being keeled over on the sidewalk. There is a reason for this.

Most Chinese men drink. But there are some men and women who will tell you they don't drink. If you ask them why, they will tell you that being drunk doesn't feel good. They are talking about that room-spinning "zuì." Drinking in China is often a communal activity and it is hard to avoid getting "zuì." This is because, in China, you do not control how much you drink. Everyone else decides for you. Whenever someone toasts you, you have to drink. There is almost no way to get out of it. (Though, as a foreigner, you may be able to duck expectations sometimes.) Thus everyone is expected to drink as much as the person who can drink the most (or who is least concerned with their health). Chinese people are often forced to this state of "zuì" by the expectations of those around them and their need to reaffirm these relationships.

The flip side of this is that there is no shame in throwing up or passing out. In the West, throwing up usually carries with it the belief that you could not control yourself. You decided to drink too much, and now you are sick. Though your friends will help you and sympathize, they still think it is your fault. This is not true in China. You throwing up is everyone else's fault. They don't even think throwing up is a bad thing. You may often see two or three friends accompanying their fallen brother as he hurls outside the restaurant. The friends are laughing and clinking bottles and slapping their disabled comrade on the back. Someone getting sick or passing out just shows that you're partying hard. People are often kind of proud of the guy throwing up. He has given his all to do the drinking his friends asked him to, he has sacrificed his personal health to affirm their closeness. Again, Chinese people really value relationships. It's kind of a nice, warm feeling. Though it doesn't always taste so good the next day.

QUICK TIP 2

Speaking of which, we might as well include one more phrase for today. "Wǒ yào tù le." means "I'm going to vomit." "Yào" means "going to" or "have to." "Tù" means "to vomit." "Le" is especially appropriate here because it signifies that you have been hit with the sudden incontrollable need to purge your stomach, not that you have been slightly nauseous for some time. If you can come up with this phrase at the right time you are a super hero and will be inducted into our All-Time Language Learner's Hall of Fame. We're betting you forget it when you need it.

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Lesson 50: Certain Medicine
我要止疼药。Wǒ yào zhǐténgyào.

LESSON NOTES

This is our last lesson about getting sick and having medical problems. This lesson is meant to help make your experience at the pharmacy easier. Michael says that when he goes to the pharmacy he usually just tells them his symptoms. He doesn't ask for a specific medicine. Hopefully the vocabulary in this lesson and the last will cover anything you need taken care of at the pharmacy.

"Zhǐténgyào" means "painkiller." "Zhǐ" means "stop," "téng" means "pain," and "yào" means "medicine." Thus "zhǐténgyào" literally means "stop pain medicine." If you want a painkiller, just go into a pharmacy, walk up to the counter, and say, "Wǒ yào zhǐténgyào." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me" and "yào" means "to want." ("Yào" has many different meanings. This one is a different character from the "yào" that means "medicine." It is the same as the one we talked about in the last lesson, but with a different usage.) There should be no other language requirements for this transaction. (Except, perhaps, understanding the price.) In some pharmacies they will ask for money at the counter where you get the medicine, others will have a separate counter where you pay.

All of today's phrases follow this same pattern: "Wǒ yào (medicine name)." Chinese is like this. The grammar is very simple. Chinese is often regarded as a very difficult language to learn, but it's really only the very beginning that is difficult. Getting yourself acclimated to the tones and recognizing characters can be very hard, but, once you're used to these systems, everything else is just about memorizing new vocabulary. Chinese is a language that definitely gets much easier as you go.

The next phrase Michael talked about was "Wǒ yào āsīpīlín." ("I want aspirin.") The characters that are used for "āsīpīlín" all have their own meaning, but in this word their meanings are unimportant. These characters were selected to mimic a certain sound. "Āsīpīlín" is meant to sound like the English "aspirin." There are many words in Chinese that are taken from other languages (though they only make up a small fraction of the Chinese lexicon). Chinese has a very rigid bank of sounds. It's not like English where we can use letters to make up sounds that we didn't have before, or just use the spelling from another language and force people to memorize the way to say it. In Chinese there are only the sounds that exist in the already created characters. So, when importing words, the Chinese have to use these characters to approximate the sound of the new word. We have seen an example of this with the word "kǎ" ("card"). This character is also part of another imported word "kǎlùlǐ" ("calorie"). The inflexibility of the Chinese sound bank can get frustrating when using Chinese for place names or names of people. All places in the world have a Chinese name, we talked about this in a previous lesson, and so do

all famous people. To take one simple example, "Beckham" in Chinese is "bèikèhànmǔ." You can see how this follows the English. Other names are not nearly as recognizable. How do you say Schwartzenegger? We forget, but it's not easy. Many of the sinicizations of names are not obvious and Chinese people often don't know famous people's names in English (or whatever language the name is in). You may often be confronted with somebody who is shocked that you don't know the particular celebrity they are talking about. "If only I could think of their name in English..." they will say scratching their head.

Let's skip to the fourth phrase Michael brought up and talk about a general formula last. "Wǒ yào kàngguòmǐnyào." means "I want allergy medicine." "Guòmǐn" means "allergic" and "kàng" means "to resist" or "to fight." Thus "kàngguòmǐnyào" is "allergy medicine."

All these examples are well and good, but you can't be expected to remember the name of every kind of medicine. This is why Michael presented you with a simple formula for saying medicines. All you have to say is the symptom or ailment you are suffering from plus "yào." (As we said, "yào" means "medicine.") In the lesson Michael used the example "headache medicine." "Tóu" means "head." "Téng" means "pain." "Tóuténg" means "headache." "Headache medicine" is then "tóuténgyào." If you want headache medicine you just say, "Wǒ yào tóuténgyào." The same is true for "cold medicine." "Gǎnmào" means "cold" (the illness only). "Wǒ yào gǎnmàoyào." means "I want cold medicine."

This formula can be applied to any symptom or disease. Saying the symptom plus "yào" will not always give you the word that Chinese people use for that kind of medicine, but it will get your point across and people should have no problem understanding you.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我要止疼药。	Wǒ yào zhǐténgyào.	I want a painkiller.
我要阿斯匹林。	Wǒ yào āsīpīlín.	I want aspirin.
我要抗过敏药。	Wǒ yào kàngguòmǐnyào.	I want allergy medicine.
我要头疼药。	Wǒ yào tóuténgyào.	I want headache medicine.
我要感冒药。	Wǒ yào gǎnmàoyào.	I want cold medicine.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
要	yào	to want
药	yào	medicine
止疼药	zhǐténgyào	painkiller
阿斯匹林	āsīpīlín	aspirin
抗过敏药	kàngguòmǐnyào	allergy medicine
过敏	guòmǐn	allergic
头疼	tóuténg	headache
感冒	gǎnmào	cold (the illness)

QUICK TIP

The following is a list of symptoms. Remember that you can pair these with the word "yào" to get the appropriate medicine for these symptoms:

Dǎ pēntì: to sneeze

Késòu: to cough

Bísài: nasal congestion

Liú bítì: to have a runny nose

Sīyǎ: hoarse

Yǎng: itchy

Zhǒng: to swell

Má: numb

Yūn: dizzy

Yùnchuán: seasick

Yùnchē: carsick

Biànmì: constipation

Fàngpì: fart

QUICK TIP 2

Chinese people don't say, "Bless you." or "Gesundheit." or anything else special when people sneeze. Some places have little sayings that are said after people sneeze, rhymes about good luck and long life, but most people will just ask you if you have a cold or offer you a tissue. There is no special significance attached to people sneezing (other than as a sign of illness) and Chinese people will think you're weird if you ask what you should say when somebody sneezes. You should ask this, it's an interesting and easy to have conversation.

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Lesson 51: Self Introduction
我叫Michael。Wǒ jiào Michael.

LESSON NOTES

Lots of people say Chinese people are rude, but actually most Chinese people are very friendly. The biggest problem is that almost all Chinese people cannot speak English. They assume there is no way for them to communicate with foreigners, so they tend to ignore you. (Or just stare.) Once you do break the ice, once you show that you're a real person, they will become incredibly welcoming. Sometimes they seem overly friendly. They will invite you out for dinner (and insist on paying), they will want your phone number and email address, they will want to know all about you and introduce you to all their friends. It is only the language barrier that turns these normally very friendly people into a mass of cold shoulders.

Today's lesson is the start of breaking the ice. Once the ice is broken you will find people are very patient with any problems you are having in Chinese, but first you have to get introduced. In the lesson, Michael went over two ways to say "My name is." These can be used if you are meeting new people on your own or if you're being introduced by a third party. The first phrase is "Wǒ jiào (your name)." This literally means "I am called..." "Wǒ" means "I" or "me." "jiào" means "to call." Together "Wǒ jiào" is "I am called." (Michael used his name as an example. The whole sentence was "Wǒ jiào Michael.")

Another way to introduce yourself is to say "Wǒ shì (your name)." This literally means "I am..." It's "Wǒ" again plus "shì," which means "to be." (Using the example "Michael," the phrase is "Wǒ shì Michael.") After you introduce yourself you can ask the people you are talking to their name. There was no time to go over this in the lesson, but that's why we have the PDFs. A simple way to ask another person's name is to just take the first phrase from today, replace the "Wǒ" with "nǐ" (which means "you"), and put "shénme" at the end to make it a question. "shénme" means "what." The new phrase is then "nǐ jiào shénme?" Literally, "You called what?" but it means "What are you called?" or "What is your name?" To this they will respond with their name. Because you have used the word "jiào," they will probably use "jiào" in their response. They will probably say "Wǒ jiào (their name)." It is customary in China to introduce yourself with just your last name. It is probably safe to assume (especially if the person you are talking to is over 30) that the name the person gives you is their family name. They will say something like "Wǒ jiào Wáng." "Wáng" is a very common Chinese last name. They may also say "Wǒ Xìng Wáng." This means "My last name is Wáng." "Xìng" means "last name" or "family name." (There are many different ways for people to introduce themselves as well as many ways for them to ask your name. We can't possibly hope to teach them all now, so good luck, and stay on your toes.)

Now that they have introduced themselves, it would be appropriate for you to say "Hěn gāoxìng rénshi nǐ." and shake their hand. "Hěn gāoxìng rénshi nǐ." means "Nice to meet you." "Hěn" means "very." "gāoxìng " means "happy." "rénshi" means "to know." ("rénshi" is often used for knowing other people, but it can be used for "knowing" Chinese characters, among other things.) "nǐ" is, again, "you." The phrase is then literally "Very good to know you." Because you are just meeting them, the meaning changes to "Very good to meet you." or "Nice to meet you." This phrase is nice to say to someone, but if you forget it, it's also okay to just say "nǐ hǎo." (Remember this means "Hello.") This is okay even if you have already said "nǐ hǎo." to them.

Now that you have met this person, what do you call them? Do you just call them "Wáng." Actually, that would be okay. It's acceptable to just call someone by their last name. But it's much nicer to add a title onto this name. Michael introduced the simplest two titles in the lesson. "Xiānshēng" means "Mr." and "xiǎojiě" means "Ms." If Wáng is a man he can be called "Wáng xiānshēng." If Wáng is a woman she would be "Wáng xiǎojiě." (Remember to change the tone on the "xiǎo" in "xiǎojiě" to second tone because there are two third tones in a row.) Just put one of these titles (the appropriate one, please) behind the person's last name and you're ready to go.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我叫Michael。	Wǒ jiào Michael.	I am called Michael., My name is Michael.
我是Michael。	Wǒ shì Michael.	I am Michael., My name is Michael. (This pattern is used with first names.)
你叫什么？	Nǐ jiào shénme?	What are you called?, What is your name?
我性王。	Wǒ xìng Wáng.	My last name is Wáng.
很高兴认识你。	Hěn gāoxìng rénshi nǐ.	Nice to meet you.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
叫	jiào	to call
是	shì	to be
你	nǐ	you
什么	shénme	what
王	Wáng	king, a common family name
性	xìng	last name, family name
很	hěn	very
高兴	gāoxìng	happy
认识	rénshi	to know, to recognize
先生	xiānshēng	Mr.
小姐	xiǎojiě	Ms.
老	lǎo	old
小	xiǎo	little, small

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
弟弟	dìdì	younger brother
哥哥	gégé	older brother
妹妹	mèimèi	younger sister
姐姐	jiějiě	older sister

QUICK TIP

Chinese people love to use nicknames. It is very common practice to add "xiǎo" or "lǎo" in front the last name of someone you are friendly with. (This should only be done in informal situations.) "xiǎo" means "little" and "lǎo" means "old." An older person (named Wáng) can be called Lǎo Wáng. Someone who is young is xiǎo Wáng. Often this is kind of a joke, people will call someone who is still quite young, but older than them, lǎo Wáng. People might call someone who acts too serious lǎo Wáng to make fun of their attitude. Someone whose is old, but acts youthful could be called xiǎo Wáng.

Chinese people also like to give people fake family titles. A woman who is older than you might be called "jiějiě" or "Wáng jiějiě." ("jiějiě" means "older sister.") Chinese people use these nicknames to indicate friendliness and a close relationship with one another. A younger man could be called "dìdì." ("Younger brother.") Chinese people also commonly use "gégé" or "dàgé" ("older brother") and "mèimèi" ("younger sister"), as well many other names for relatives. But remember this is very informal, and usually starts as the drinks begin to flow.

QUICK TIP 2

Chinese people don't bow. Do not make this mistake. (Other Asian cultures do it too and the Chinese used to do it. The wait staff at fancy restaurants still do it, but you don't want to mimic the wait staff.) Chinese people shake hands now. Bowing will make you look silly and possibly embarrass the people you are meeting.

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Lesson 52: Introducing Others
这是Michael。Zhè shì Michael.

LESSON NOTES

Today's lesson is very straightforward, there is no grammar involved and the word order follows the English exactly. "Zhè shì" means "this is." "Zhè" means "this" and "shì" is "to be." To introduce someone you are with you can just say "Zhè shì" followed by their name. If your friend's name is Bobby Valentine, you would say "Zhè shì Bobby Valentine." ("This is Bobby Valentine." Bobby needs people to introduce him; he only speaks Japanese, not Chinese.)

It's often helpful to introduce people's relation to you in addition to their name, as there is a big difference between a sibling and a spouse. Let's start with "friend." "Friend" in Chinese is "péngyou." To say "my friend" you just add "wǒ" ("I" or "me"). Literally "wǒ péngyou" would be "me friend," but it means "my friend." You can also add "de" after "wǒ" to make it "wǒ de péngyou." "De" is the possessive particle, here it changes "me" to "my." When we are talking about something we own we should always use "de." "My car" is "wǒ de chē." But when talking about close personal relationships, the Chinese don't use "de." It's okay to use "de" for more distant relationships. People often say "wǒ de tóngxué" ("my classmate") or "wǒ de lǎobǎn" ("my boss"). But for close relationships like relatives and friends, "de" is rarely used. People just say "wo3 péngyou." To introduce your friend the whole phrase would be "Zhè shì wǒ péngyou." ("This is my friend.") You can add your friend's name after this ("Zhè shì wǒ péngyou, Bobby Valentine.) but you don't have to. The phrase is perfectly complete by itself. If you have been waiting for you friend, and you are about to leave, it is absolutely normal not to give your friend's name. If you are introducing a friend to the hosts of a dinner party, it's probably best to get names out of the way right at the beginning. (Though life doesn't always play out this way.)

Today's podcast also included words for spouses. "Zhè shì wǒ zhàngfu." means "This is my husband." "Zhè shì wǒ qǐzi." means "This is my wife." (Remember to change "wǒ" to a second tone in the latter phrase because it precedes another third tone.) These can be used in exactly the same way as "Zhè shì wǒ péngyou."

If you want to say boyfriend or girlfriend, it is very much like English. You just say male or female plus the word for friend. "Girlfriend" is "nǚpéngyou." "Boyfriend" is "nánpéngyou." ("Nǚ" means "female" and "nán" means "male.") Be aware though, people are sometimes a little uncomfortable about saying the words "boyfriend" or "girlfriend" out loud, and will sometimes call their significant other their "péngyou" ("friend") even though they've been dating for years.

The next step in any introduction is for the parties being introduced to say "Hello." Remember, "Nǐ hǎo." means "Hello." The "nǐ" is changed to second tone because "hǎo" is third tone. This common greeting is always appropriate, no matter the circumstances. You could get fancy and

use some of the other greetings we studied in the first lesson. You could say the very formal "Nín hǎo." But "Nǐ hǎo." is probably your best bet. It's polite, but it doesn't sound stuffy or overdone. Almost nobody, other than customer service representatives, uses "nín."

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这是Michael。	Zhè shì Michael.	This is Michael.
这是我朋友Bobby Valentine。	Zhè shì wǒ péngyou, Bobby Valentine.	This is my friend, Bobby Valentine.
这是我丈夫Peter。	Zhè shì wǒ zhàngfu, Peter.	This is my husband, Peter.
这是我妻子。	Zhè shì wǒ qǐzi.	This is my wife.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
这	zhè	this
是	shì	to be
我	wǒ	I, me
朋友	péngyou	friend
丈夫	zhàngfu	husband
妻子	qǐzi	wife
同学	tóngxué	classmate
女朋友	nǚpéngyou	girlfriend
男朋友	nánpéngyou	boyfriend
先生	xiānshēng	Mr.
太太	tàitai	Mrs.

QUICK TIP

People often do not to give a person's name when they introduce them. Sometimes we do this on purpose. A girl on a first date who runs into some of her friends may purposely not reveal her guest's name because she's embarrassed or is unsure of the strength of the relationship. Most of the time though, this failure to give names is accidental. We are not all great in social situations, and in the heat of the moment we might just say, "This is my wife." and not "This is my wife, Peggy Lee." What are you to do if you've been introduced to someone, but have never gotten their name? (This seems to happen very frequently with Chinese married couples.) One tactic is to combine "Mr." or "Mrs." with the last name of their spouse. "Mr." came up in lesson on self introductions, in Chinese it is "Xiānshēng." We have not studied "Mrs." before. In Chinese, "Mrs." is "Tàitai." These titles come after the last name of the person you're addressing. "Mr. Wang" would be "Wáng Xiānshēng." "Mrs. Wang" would be "Wáng Tàitai." The problem with this is that Chinese people do not change their last names after marriage. A woman named Wang will still be called Wang after she gets married to a Li. Still, it is considered okay to call a woman "Wáng Tàitai" if the man she is married to is named Wang and you don't know her last name. Calling her this just recognizes that she is married to a man named Wang, everyone still knows that this is not her family name. A man, however, might not like it so much if you were to refer to him by his wife's last name. One thing about this world, and something that is particularly true

in Asia, men do not like being defined by their wives. (In China it is very hard for a woman with a doctorate to find a husband because most men want to marry someone with a lower degree of education than themselves. "Woman doctor" practically means "old maid" in China.) Thus, there is the second way to deal with this problem: ask their name. Maybe you precede this with "Bùhǎoyìsī." ("Sorry.") Then move into the way of asking someone's name that we went over in the self introduction lesson: "Nǐ jiào shénme?" ("What are you called?") Asking someone's name is never out of line, even if you've already been told it. Most Chinese take it for granted that foreigners cannot remember Chinese names. (Which leads us to Quick Tip 2.)

QUICK TIP 2

Many Chinese people have English names. Just as we said before, Chinese people take it for granted that foreigners will not be able to pronounce or remember their names. For this reason, almost all Chinese people get an English name whenever they start to study English. This name is not considered permanent and many Chinese people will pick a new name whenever the fancy strikes them. (Like when they see a movie they particularly like.) Some Chinese people, however, will keep this first name for their entire life. In foreign companies or companies that interact with foreigners often, everyone will have an English name and this will be the only name they are known by. An entire office of Chinese people speaking Chinese will still call each other by their English names. Some people get so used to this English name that it becomes the only name they ever use. So do not be surprised when many people, especially young people and those from business sectors, tell you an English name. It may seem strange at first, but it has become a normal part of many people's lives.

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Lesson 53: Long Time, No See
好久不见。Hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn.

LESSON NOTES

We once talked to an Australian who had lived in China for a little while. During that time he had a German girlfriend who spoke some Chinese. "She had such nice Chinese." he'd say. "Whenever she talked people would smile." His girlfriend didn't have great Chinese, but she knew what to say.

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to make people smile? Today's lesson is an example of just that kind of Chinese. "Hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn." ("Long time no see.") is not necessary for getting around China. It won't help you when you're in trouble and it won't allow you to buy things on the cheap. Today's phrase has no use but to make other people smile.

"Hǎo" means "good" and "jiǔ" means "a long time." Together, "hǎo jiǔ" means "a good long time." "Jiǔ" is rarely used by itself (this is an example of a Chinese tendency we talked about earlier; their want to make two syllable words). Generally "jiǔ" is combined with "hǎo" or "hěn" ("very"). It is difficult to say whether adding "hǎo" to "jiǔ" really changes the meaning in common speech. Yes, technically "hǎo jiǔ" should be a longer time than "jiǔ," but people almost never say "jiǔ" by itself, so it's hard to compare. Today's phrase is a set phrase, but even in other instances you should not use "jiǔ" without adding "hǎo" or "hěn." (Remember to change the third tone on "hǎo" or "hěn" to a second tone because "jiǔ" is also a third tone.)

"Bù" means "no" and "jiàn" means "to see" or "to meet." Together they are literally "no see." "Bù" changes to a second tone when it is followed by another fourth tone, as is the case here.

Altogether the phrase is "Hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn." This means "Long time no see." This is used in exactly the same way as the English expression. You say it when you meet up with someone. It can be used sarcastically with someone you see all the time. It's a very friendly phrase and hearing it from the mouth of a foreigner, from a new initiate to China, is bound to put a smile on people's faces.

In the lesson Michael introduced a slightly modified form of the phrase: he added "le" to the end to make the whole phrase "Hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn le." What does "le" add to this phrase? The answer is, not much. Some Chinese people assert that adding "le" is more casual. Other's say it represents a change in situation from the past when you and the person you are talking to met a lot. Everyone agrees that whether or not you add "le" doesn't make very much difference.

Still, now seems like a good time to have a very brief overview of what "le" adds to a sentence. Different aspects of "le" are discussed in more detail in other lessons. This is just an overview. It will exceptionally brief. "Le" has two main uses: 1. Put a sentence in the past tense. 2. Indicate a change of situation.

The first use: "Le" is put after the verb in a sentence to indicate that verb is in the past tense. "Wǒ chī." means "I eat." or "I will eat." "Wǒ chī le." means "I ate."

The second use: "Le" is put at the end of a sentence to indicate that the situation described in the sentence is a change from the previous situation. "Xiàyǔ." means "It's raining." People say "Míngtiān xiàyǔ." which means "It will rain tomorrow." Or they say "Xiàyǔ." in response to the question "Is it still raining?" But when someone is outside and it starts to rain they add a "le," they say "Xiàyǔ le." This points out that the rain is just starting. A minute ago it wasn't raining, but now it is.

Another example: When sick people get better they say "Hǎo le." "Hǎo" means "good," as we've said before. Adding the "le" indicates that, yes, they were sick before, but now they are better.

Both these uses of "le" are very common. Which is being used when "le" is added to "hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn"? That is hard to say. Perhaps it makes it more casual, it adds a nice flip of the tongue. Either way, it does not effect the meaning enough for you to worry about saying it one way or another.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
好久不见。	Hǎo jiǔ bùjiàn.	Long time no see.
好了。	Hǎo le.	It's better.
下雨了。	Xiàyǔ le.	It's started raining.
吃了@@@	Chī le ma?	Have you eaten?
吃了。	Chī le.	I ate.
还没有。	Hái méiyǒu.	Not yet.

QUICK TIP

Another great Chinese greeting is "Chī le ma?" This means "Have you eaten?" "Chī" means "to eat," "le" puts it into the past tense, and "ma" makes it a question. You don't need to add "you" ("nǐ") because in the context of a greeting it should be pretty obvious who you are talking to. "Chī le ma?" is an old fashioned greeting and has become somewhat of a joke. We can't tell you how this greeting started, but it's been in use for a while. It is one more example of the emphasis the Chinese put on food. You can see friends passing each other on the street waving and one of them yelling out, "Chī le ma?" The other one always laughs. This greeting has become somewhat anachronistic, which means it's definitely good for a smile. People respond by saying either "Chī le." ("I've eaten.") or "Hái méiyǒu." ("Not yet." "Hái" means "still" and "méiyǒu" is the past tense version of "no." More on that some other time.) "Chī le ma?" can be the preface to a long conversation or it can be something just said in passing. It can be used at any time of the day, though it is strange to use it on someone if you know whether they've eaten or not. (Perhaps

you are staying in the same hotel room.) If someone says this to you, you only need to answer the question, you do not need to ask them in turn. The joke has been made, it is less funny the second time around. Try this phrase on your Chinese friends, it is exceedingly friendly.

QUICK TIP 2

We are not sure how accurate this is, but it's an interesting point of view and contains at least a kernel of truth. (We will use Americans as the example because that is the example the Chinese teacher chose.)

A Chinese teacher once said, "Americans are like peaches and the Chinese are like coconuts. Americans are very soft on the outside, but they will reserve an inner pit that is their own and only ever let a few people inside of it. The Chinese can be hard on the outside, but once you crack through their shell, they will give you everything inside them."

Americans are very good at making new friends; they love to meet new people and make conversation. This is a foreign concept (no pun intended) for Chinese people. The Chinese tend to have a small circle of friends delineated by their work, schooling, and family. Chinese people rarely have friends they have met outside of these three situations. Parties and going out to bars are not a common thing for the Chinese (though, like everything in China, this is changing). If someone does hold a party, it is often an office or class party. Classmates and co-workers all go out to a restaurant or karaoke club together. People do not bring outsiders, there is no walking around and mingling with new people. Chinese people, when they do go to bars or clubs, often express their preference for being able to sit with their friends and get table service. They have no intention of mixing with other people at the bar.

On the other hand, after an American meets someone and has a nice conversation, they are very likely to say, "Well, it was nice meeting you. I have to be off." And that's the end of the relationship. This is not so with the Chinese. Once you have managed to crack the ice with a Chinese person (and remember, this is a generalization) they will almost certainly want to exchange telephone numbers. If you meet someone while traveling they will want your email address and they will want to keep up a correspondence. People will give you a business card and say that if you have any problems, you should contact them; and they mean this. In China, relationships are built off of helping one another. Chinese people expect you to come to them with your problems. They will make lots of time to help people they have met only recently with mundane issues. And this is not just because you are a foreigner (though there is a certain amount of helping-the-guest graciousness in these gestures) Chinese people do the same for each other. Many Chinese people will offer you a place to stay in your first meeting. They will change their hotel reservations to be with you. Generally, they will do everything they can to help you, even though you've just met. For many Chinese people being friends is taken very seriously.

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Lesson 54: What Time Is It?
现在几点？ Xiànzài jǐdiǎn?

LESSON NOTES

Your mobile phone (probably) isn't going to work in China. This is an inconvenience in itself, but brings along with it the added problem that you may lose track of time. More and more people are using their mobile phones as watches. If you're one of these people then you need to add a wristwatch to the list of things you need for China; although it's not like there won't be many cheap watches for sale once you get there. If you ever find yourself without your timepiece, perhaps it clashes with your oh-so-fashionable traveler's pouch, today's phrase will come in handy.

Michael went through the phrases backwardly. It makes a lot more sense to start with the words for different times:

1:00- yīdiǎn

2:00- liǎngdiǎn

3:00- sāndiǎn

4:00- sìdiǎn

5:00- wǔdiǎn

6:00- liùdiǎn

7:00- qīdiǎn

8:00- bādiǎn

9:00- jiǔdiǎn

10:00- shídiǎn

11:00- shíyīdiǎn

12:00- shíèrdiǎn

As Michael said, "diǎn" basically translates as "o'clock." When you are telling time you put "diǎn" behind a number to signify the hour of the day. "Diǎn," however, does not mean "hour." If you want to say "three hours" instead of "three o'clock" then you would say "sān ge xiǎoshí." "Ge"

is a measure word and "xiǎoshí" means "hour." ("Xiǎo" means "little" and "shí" means "time.") Remember to correct the tones on "liǎngdiǎn," "wǔdiǎn," and "jiǔdiǎn." The initial third tones on these times become second tones because "diǎn" is also a third tone.

We've talked about "jǐ" in previous lessons. "Jǐ" means "how many" (or "a few"). "Jǐdiǎn?" is used to ask the time and literally means "How many o'clock?" Here, again, we change the initial third tone to a second tone to prevent there being two third tones in a row.

Usually when Chinese people ask what time it is they say, "Xiànzài jǐdiǎn?" "Xiànzài" means "now." Literally this phrase is "Now how many o'clock?" It is used to ask, "What time is it now?" This is much, much more common than just saying "Jǐdiǎn?"

When asking the time from a stranger it is polite to preface your question with "Qǐng wèn." "Qǐng" means "please." "Wèn" means "to ask." "Qǐng wèn." is then equivalent to saying "May I ask?" The whole time-asking sequence would be: "Qǐng wèn. Xiànzài jǐdiǎn?" "Qǐng wèn." can be used as a polite interjection before any questions you'd like to ask.

To add minutes to the time you just say the number of minutes after "diǎn" and then follow that number with "fēn." "Fēn" means "minute." "5:55" would be "wǔdiǎn wǔshíwǔfēn." "4:23" is "sìdiǎn èrshísānfēn."

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
现在几点？	Xiànzài jǐdiǎn?	What time is it now?
四点。	Sìdiǎn.	4 o'clock.
请问。	Qǐng wèn.	May I ask?
十二点四十分。	Shíèrdiǎn sìshífēn.	12:40.
十二点半。	Shíèrdiǎn bàn.	Half past twelve.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
点	diǎn	o'clock
个	ge	universal measure word
小时	xiǎoshí	hour
几	jǐ	how many, a few
现在	xiànzài	now
请	qǐng	please
问	wèn	to ask
分	fēn	minute
半	bàn	half
刻	kè	quarter of an hour

QUICK TIP

Chinese people rarely say, "sìdiǎn sānshífēn." Usually they say, "sìdiǎn bàn." "Bàn" means "half." One could think of "sìdiǎn bàn" as meaning "half past four." Really, no one says "sānshífēn."

Chinese people do often say things like "liǎngdiǎn shíwǔfēn." But they're also just as likely to say, "liǎngdiǎn yīkè." "Kè" means a quarter of an hour, but it is only used as "yīkè." No one says "sānkè" for "45."

QUICK TIP 2

Military time (a 24-hour clock) is used all over China. You will often see digital clocks that read "22:30" or "16:20." We're sure everyone understands military time and won't be too thrown off by this, but we figured it would be nice to say something about it. Military time is so common that many people use it in their speech. People will sometimes talk about getting out of work at "shíqīdiǎn" ("17:00") or catching a train at "èrshíèrdiǎn" ("22:00").

In addition to running on military time, China also technically has only one time zone. China is about as large as the U.S. (which has four time zones), but the entire country is on Beijing time. Beijing is located in the eastern most part of the country. This means that the areas of Tibet and Xinjiang in the western part of the country, areas that are already somewhat isolated from the government, tend to have some clocks set to their own unofficial time. Certain actions in these regions (when one goes to work or school, for example) are still controlled by the government and thus technically use government time, but the regional government will change the timing of these actions to make up for the absence of time zones. Thus schoolchildren in Xinjiang are told to attend class at 10 AM. They are used to eating lunch at 2 PM.

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Lesson 55: Likes and Dislikes
我喜欢。Wǒ xǐhuān.

LESSON NOTES

Do we need to explain why expressing likes and dislikes is an important part of language? Isn't that self-evident? Shouldn't we instead spend more time trumpeting the glories of Chinese food; it's elegant sweets, captivating sours, fragrant aromas, and in-your-face spiciness? Almost all topics of discussion have two sides, this is one of the exceptions. Chinese food is so varied, that it is impossible for anyone to say they don't like Chinese food. Impossible. We won't hear of it. You don't like spicy? Try Shanghai cuisine, it's delicate, sometimes with a hint of sweetness. Don't like sweet? Sichuan cuisine combines hot peppers and garlic for knock-your-socks-off savory. Or check out Yunnan for crispy fried vegetables and delectable pickles. Against oil? The people of Zhejiang aren't too into oil either. They prefer lightly flavored steamed and stir-fried dishes. Don't like rice? In Xinjiang they don't eat it. Many Xinjiang restaurants don't have any rice. They fill that spot with roast bread and noodles; and, of course, seasoned goat. And then there's Guangdong food, which is a category all its own and a Shangri-la of tastes for those who dare to put forth their tongues. (The people of Guangdong are famous for eating anything they can catch and cook.) We have left out at least 10 other major styles of cooking in the Chinese palette. China is just too big and has too long a history to not have developed many different styles of cuisine. Each province has a richness of cooking history comparable to most nations. It is acceptable to say that one does not like a certain style of Chinese food, but to say one does not like Chinese food as a whole is out and out ridiculous. And we will accept no arguments to the contrary.

"Wǒ xǐhuān." means "I like it." (A phrase you will often find yourself using in China.) "Wǒ" means "I" or "me," and "xǐhuān" means "to like." As we have seen before, the object "it," which appears in the English, is not included in the Chinese. "It" is unnecessary if people know what you are talking about. Because of this background, Chinese people, when speaking English, often forget to add an object into their speech. If you ask them, "Do you like living in England?" they will answer "I like." They are directly translating "Wǒ xǐhuān." When using this phrase remember that "wǒ" becomes a second tone because it has another third tone following it.

You can add objects onto the end of this phrase to make it more specific. Let's start with "this" and "that." Just to refresh your memory, "this" is "zhège" and "that" is "nàge." If someone asks you to indicate a preference between two things presented to you, you can pick one by saying "Wǒ xǐhuān zhège." ("I like this.") or "Wǒ xǐhuān nàge." ("I like that.")

You can make the sentence even more specific by using a noun instead of a pronoun. Just put whatever it is you like after "xǐhuān." Our example is "Chinese food," because everyone loves Chinese food. (Again, there is no other acceptable position on this matter.) The Chinese,

however, don't know that everyone like Chinese food. Chinese people will often be very interested in whether or not you like Chinese food. They like Chinese food, there are rumors among the Chinese that Westerners cannot stomach Chinese food. This is where "Wǒ xǐhuān Zhōngguócài." is going to come in handy. "Zhōngguó" means "China" and "cài" means "food." Together they mean "Chinese food." The whole phrase means "I like Chinese food." You can plug in any noun you want instead of "Chinese food" to indicate your fondness towards that noun. We were just trying to put an idea in your head.

What if you don't like something? It's perfectly alright to have dislikes. To negate the phrase we just insert "bù" ("no") in front of "xǐhuān." The phrase "Wǒ bù xǐhuān." literally translates as "I no like." It means "I don't like it." It is important to note that once "wǒ" and "xǐhuān" are separated by "bù," "wǒ" reverts back to third tone. The usage of the phrase does not change when it is negated, we can still just add objects onto the end to specify what we are talking about. Let's try one. "Měiguó" means "America" and "Měiguócài" means "American food." "Wǒ bù xǐhuān Měiguócài." thus means "I don't like American food." Actually, we shouldn't pick on American food. Once you get past the cloying, commercial surface of American food, past the McDonald's, the KFCs, and Pizza Huts, American food has a richness and variety that is seldom explored. If you don't believe us, we suggest a road trip. Though for that trip you won't need survival phrases, just a prescription for Lipitor.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我喜欢。	Wǒ xǐhuān.	I like it.
我不喜欢。	Wǒ bù xǐhuān.	I don't like it.
我喜欢这个。	Wǒ xǐhuān zhège.	I like this.
我喜欢中国菜。	Wǒ xǐhuān Zhōngguócài.	I like Chinese food.
我不喜欢唱歌。	Wǒ bù xǐhuān chàng gē.	I don't like to sing.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I
喜欢	xǐhuān	like
中国菜	Zhōngguócài	Chinese food
美国菜	Měiguócài	American food
唱	chàng	to sing
不喜欢	bù xǐhuān	do not like

QUICK TIP

So how do you ask someone else about what they like or dislike? Making questions out of declarative statements is really easy in Chinese: just add "ma" to the end of the sentence. "Nǐ xǐhuān ma?" means "Do you like it?" ("Nǐ" means "you.") Any of the phrases we have talked about can be made into a question just by adding "ma."

Chinese people will often ask you, "Nǐ xǐhuān Zhōngguócài ma?" ("Do you like Chinese food?") How do you answer this question? As we've said in previous lessons, Chinese does not have a good equivalent for "yes." If you want to answer the question above with a "yes," you would say, "Wǒ xǐhuān Zhōngguócài." or "Wǒ xǐhuān." or simply "Xǐhuān." (We know who and what we're talking about from the question.) As we've said before, in Chinese, yes or no questions are generally answered by repeating the verb or the adjective in question. If you want to say no, you just negate the verb or adjective in your answer. So if you want to answer that you don't like Chinese food (heathen!) you would say, "Wǒ bù xǐhuān Zhōngguócài." or "Wǒ bù xǐhuān." or just "Bù xǐhuān." You could simply say "Bù." ("No.") but it would sound funny and kind of incomplete. "Bù xǐhuān." is much better.

QUICK TIP 2

You can also attach verb phrases to the end of today's phrase. "Chàng" means "to sing" and "gē" means "song." Together "chànggē" means "to sing songs," but it also often has the hidden meaning "to sing karaoke." The Chinese (and many other Asian nations) have a love affair with karaoke that Westerners find, at the very least, hard to understand. Many Chinese people consider karaoke the ideal way to spend a night out. China has many, many karaoke clubs. These are big buildings with lots of private rooms that people rent out by the hour. Chinese people will spend hours singing their favorite songs, and will want you to come along too. While it's definitely a good idea to check out Chinese culture, including how they like to spend their free time, it's understandable if you get very tired of singing the same Bon Jovi and Carpenters songs again and again. (The selection of English songs is very limited.) For this reason it may become necessary to say, "Wǒ bù xǐhuān chàng gē." ("I don't like singing songs.") Your friends may be a little disappointed, but sometimes that's a small price to pay to get out of singing "Yesterday Once More" again.

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Lesson 56: Useful and High Frequency Adjectives

我很高兴。Wǒ hěn gāoxìng.

LESSON NOTES

We originally set out to make 50 lessons, but at the end we've tacked on a bunch of "bonus" lessons. These lessons have been covering things we forgot or felt we couldn't leave out or, in the case of today's lesson, just some stuff that we thought might be nice.

The most simple way to use adjectives in Chinese is: subject+"hěn"+adjective. "Hěn" means "very." A sample sentence with the first adjective from today "gao1xing4" ("happy") would be: "Wǒ hěn gāoxìng." ("I am happy.") Notice that "hěn" takes the place of the English verb "to be." "Hěn" does not carry with it the meaning "to be." Chinese does away with the use of a verb in these simple adjective phrases. It is in fact okay to say, "Wǒ gāoxìng." The use of a verb is unnecessary in this kind of phrase. "Hěn" is added simply because it sounds nice. "Wǒ gāoxìng." has the same meaning as "Wǒ hěn gāoxìng." But "Wǒ gāoxìng." sounds kind of terse. The Chinese feel that "Wǒ hěn gāoxìng." rolls off the tongue better. Thus, while "hěn" keeps the meaning "very," it is mostly ignored in these sentences. It is just viewed as a place-keeper, something to make the sentence flow better. (Remember to change the third tone on "wǒ" to a second tone because it precedes the third tone on "hěn.")

While "hěn" is just a phonetic place-holder, Chinese people do often use modifiers of degree with adjectives. These replace "hěn" in the sentence. "Fēicháng" means "extremely." "Wǒ fēicháng gāoxìng." means "I am extremely happy." "Zhēn" means "really" and "yǒudiǎn" means "a little." "Wǒ zhēn gāoxìng." means "I am really happy." "Wǒ yǒudiǎn gāoxìng." means "I am a little happy."

"Gāoxìng" ("happy") is the combination of "gāo," which means "high," and "xìng," which means "pleasure." Younger Chinese people sometimes use the English word "high" in their Chinese sentences to mean "happy." They will say, "Wǒ hěn high." It's sometimes tough not to giggle a little when a Chinese person tells you excitedly in English, "I'm very high!"

We can use our simple adjective phrase with any of the other adjectives from today's lesson. The second phrase would be "Wǒ hěn bēishāng." ("I am sad.") "Bēi" means "sad" and "shāng" means "hurt." Another way to say "sad" is "shāngxīn" which literally means "hurt heart." ("Xīn" means "heart.")

"Yǒu qù" means "interesting." "Yǒu" means "to have." "Qù" means "interest" or "delight." Technically you could say, "Wǒ hěn yǒu qù." but that sounds quite arrogant. Better to say "Nǐ hěn yǒu qù." ("You are interesting.") or "Nà hěn yǒu qù." ("That is interesting.") "Yǒu qù." can be used for both people and things.

Another adjective that uses "yǒu" (and that will play into the next adjective from the lesson) is "yǒu yìsi." "Yìsi" means "meaning." Thus "yǒu yìsi" literally means "having meaning" or "meaningful." "Yǒu yìsi" is used to mean "interesting" or "fun." (It's hard to make a difference between the two in Chinese.) "Nǐ hěn yǒu yìsi." would mean "You are lots of fun."

"Méi" negates "yǒu." Thus "méiyǒu yìsi" means "uninteresting" or "boring" "Méiyǒu yìsi" can be shortened to "méi yìsi." When negating an adjective you generally would not use "hěn." The syllable that "hěn" took up to help the flow of the sentence has been replaced by the negater. "Hěn" is no longer necessary. If you were to include "hěn" (or any other modifier of degree) it would be to add meaning. "Hěn méi yìsi" would mean "very boring." If you want to negate adjectives that don't use "yǒu," just place "bù" ("no") before the adjective.

The next two are totally simple: "lèi" means "tired" and "jìmò" means "lonely." Plugged into the formula they become "Wǒ hěn lèi." and "Wǒ hěn jìmò."

"Pà" means "afraid." "Wǒ hěn pà." means "I am afraid." "Kě" means "can" or "may." Combined with "pà" it is an adjective for things that make you afraid. "Kěpà" thus means "scary." "Kě" may be combined with a number of different words to describe things that make you do whatever "kě" is combined with. "Xiào" means "to laugh." "Kěxiào" means "funny." (Though it means it more in a negative sense, as in "laughable.")

"Nánshòu" means "uncomfortable." "Nán" means "difficult" and "shòu" means "to stand" or "to endure." Thus "nánshòu" literally means "hard to stand" or "hard to deal with." "Wǒ hěn nánshòu." means "I am uncomfortable." (Maybe your girlfriend dumped you or the chair you are sitting in is broken.) "Nán" can be combined with many different verbs to create adjectives. "Chī" means "to eat." "Nánchī" means "tastes bad." "Tīng" means "to hear." "Nántīng" means "sounds bad." "Michael de shēngyīn hěn nántīng." means "Michael's voice is grating." ("Shēngyīn" means "sound" or "voice.")

The last little bit of the lesson goes over things we touched on earlier in this PDF. Michael mentions that "bù" negates adjectives. He uses "bù hǎo" ("not good") as his example. He then puts in one modifier of degree that we purposely left off till now: "tài." "Tài" means "too." As we mentioned before, modifiers of degree replace "hěn" in the sentence structure. "Tài" and an adjective should usually be followed by "le." We don't have an explanation for this, it's just the way things are done. "Nǐ tài hǎo le." thus literally means "You are too good." This is not the best translation though. It is better to translate it as "You are great." "Tài" in Chinese does not have the same connotations as "too" in English. "Too" means more than desirable or permissible. "Tài" often just means "very." This changes in context. "Niánqing1" means "young." Most of the time when older people say "Nǐ tài niánqīng le." they are are complimenting you. They are saying, "You are so young." But there are instances, perhaps when discussing marriage, getting old, or other "mature" topics, when "Nǐ tài niánqīng le." loses its positive connotation. There it means "You are too young."

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我很高兴。	Wǒ hěn gāoxìng.	I am happy.
我饿死了。	Wǒ è sǐ le.	I am starving.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
我	wǒ	I, me
你	nǐ	you
很	hěn	very
是	shì	to be
非常	fēicháng	extremely
真	zhēn	really
有点	yǒudiǎn	a little
高兴	gāoxìng	happy
悲伤	bēishāng	sad
伤心	shāngxīn	sad
有趣	yǒu qù	interesting
有意思	yǒu yìsi	interesting, fun
没意思	méi yìsi	boring
累	lèi	tired
寂寞	jìmò	lonely
怕	pà	afraid
可怕	kěpà	scary
可笑	kěxiào	funny, laughable
不	bù	no
太	tài	too
年轻	niánqīng	young
死	sǐ	to die
饿	è	hungry
她	tā	she
他	tā	he
它	tā	it
男的	nánde	male
女的	nǚde	female
好	hǎo	good
难受	nánshòu	uncomfortable
难吃	nánchī	tastes bad
难听	nántīng	bad sounding

QUICK TIP

A common colloquial way of modifying the degree of an adjective is to add "sǐ le" after the adjective. "Sǐ" means "to die." Adding "sǐ le" to an adjective means "extremely." "Wǒ lèi sǐ le." means "I am dead tired." "Wǒ jìmò sǐ le." means "I am so lonely I could die." The most common usage of this is probably "Wǒ è sǐ le." ("I am starving." "È" means "hungry.")

QUICK TIP 2

Somehow we have neglected "he," "she," and "it" throughout this entire series. It is one of the quirks of the Chinese language that all three are pronounced the same way; they are all "tā." The only way to tell the difference is from the Chinese characters. Often Chinese people will ask a friend who is telling a story if the "tā" in the story is "nánde" ("male") or "nǚde" ("female"). If they don't know the character in the story then there is no way for them to know. Because of this you will notice that Chinese people speaking English often mix up "he" and "she." They are not used to making this phonetic distinction in pronouns.

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Lesson 57: Congratulations (Bonus)
生日快乐。Shēngrì kuàilè.

LESSON NOTES

We're right at the end, so we might as well start congratulating ourselves. "Gōngxǐ, gōngxǐ." But we're not there yet. We've still got a couple of lessons to go in your introduction to Chinese and China.

We're going to whip through the lesson's content pretty quickly because most of this PDF will actually be in the Quick Tips. (Why do we call them Quick Tips if they're longer than the actual lesson? Don't know. The name was handed down from on high.)

"Shēngrì kuàilè." means "Happy birthday." "Shēngrì" means "birthday." Literally it's characters are "birth" ("shēng") and "day" ("rì"). "Kuàilè" means "happy." Traditionally, the Chinese eat noodles for lunch on their birthday. Now, many people buy Western-style cakes and sing "Happy Birthday." The Chinese words to "Happy Birthday" go: "Zhù nǐ shēngrì kuàilè." This means "Wish you a happy birthday." ("Zhù" means "to wish" and "nǐ" means "you.") This sentence is sang again and again to the tune of "Happy Birthday." Much like in the West, the singing is often out of tune. Also, Western-style cakes in China generally involve cheap whipped cream and fruit and are not very good. (That is Michael's opinion. Feel free to make posts in which you lambaste him for it.)

Chinese New Year is called "Chūnjié" in Chinese. This literally means "Spring Festival." ("Chūn" means "spring" and "jié" means "festival" or "holiday.") Many Chinese people are unaware that Westerners say "Chinese New Year" and will talk about "Spring Festival" with foreigners. They are greeted with blank stares. Now you will know what they are talking about when they say "Spring Festival." Quick Tip 1 is all about Chinese New Year, so, right now, we will only touch on the proper sayings.

"Gōngxǐ fācái." is a traditional saying used during the Chinese New Year. It literally means "Congratulations and be prosperous." ("Gōngxǐ" means "congratulations." "Fā" means "to come out" and "cái" means "wealth.") People also say, "Xīnnián kuàilè." or "Guòniánhǎo." These are greetings used during the New Year. "Xīnnián kuàilè." is more recent in origin. It literally means "New Year happy." It is an adaptation of the Western "Happy New Year." Just as "Shēngrì kuàilè." is an adaptation of the Western "Happy birthday." ("Xīn" means "new" and "nián" means

"year.") "Guòniánhǎo." is more traditional and literally means "Pass year good." ("Guò" means "to pass," "nián" means "year," and "hǎo" means "good.") All three sayings should be yelled at the top of one's lungs. As you will see if you ever have the good fortune to be in China for the Spring Festival, Chinese New Year is not a time for being quiet.

"Gōngxǐ" ("congratulations") may also be used as a response to hearing about someone's promotion, high test score, or new child.

The list of Chinese holidays is far too long to go into here, but there are two others of note: the Mid-Autumn Festival and the Dragon Boat Festival. All traditional Chinese holidays are based on the lunar calendar and thus fall on a different day every year. The Mid-Autumn Festival falls in mid-to-late September. The Dragon Boat Festival is in early-to-mid June. They, and many other Chinese holidays, have wonderful back stories and celebrations. What a pity that we don't have space to discuss them.

But Spring Festival beckons...

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
生日快乐。	Shēngrì kuàilè.	Happy birthday.
恭喜发财！	Gōngxǐ fācái!	Congratulations and be prosperous!
新年快乐。	Xīnnián kuàilè.	Happy New Year.
过年好。	Guòniánhǎo.	Happy New Year.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
生日	shēngrì	birthday
快乐	kuàilè	happy
春节	chūnjié	Spring Festival, Chinese New Year
恭喜	gōngxǐ	congratulations
发	fā	to come out
财	cái	wealth
新	xīn	new
年	nián	year
过	guò	to pass
好	hǎo	good

QUICK TIP

The Chinese New Year is celebrated right before the beginning of spring. Thus it is called Spring Festival ("Chūnjié.") The festival begins on New Year's Eve, the night before the first day of the first month of the lunar calendar, and lasts till the fifteenth day of the first month. The New Year (the first day) usually falls in early-to-mid February on the Gregorian calendar (though sometimes it is in late January).

The legend goes that the people of ancient China believed in the Nian, a man-eating beast that came down from the mountains (or from under the sea, depending on who's telling the legend and where they come from) every 12 months to wreak havoc on mankind. The Nian could be frightened away by loud noises and liberal use of the color red. So people began the custom of painting things red and banging drums and clappers and setting off fireworks. Thus every year people celebrate "guònián" ("the passing of the Nian"). They celebrate that they have scared off the Nian and he has not eaten them. This legend, of course, is a play on words, as "nián" means "year" and thus "guònián" means "the passing of a year."

The Chinese celebrate the New Year with their families. Almost every Chinese person goes home for the New Year. Traditionally, extended families are brought together for huge reunion banquets on New Year's Eve. Now, many people are content just to be with with their immediate family. Still, the time around Chinese New Year is the time of the world's largest human migration. During this time migrant workers go home to be with their families and overseas Chinese go back to China. In this time there are more than one billion trips taken within China.

Many different types of food are common during New Year's feasts and what is served often depends on what part of China you are in. Fish is generally eaten everywhere because the word for "fish" ("yú") sounds the same as the word for "surplus." Mandarin oranges are also eaten all over China because they are abundant at that time (and they are delicious). Northern Chinese people generally eat boiled dumplings called "jiǎozi" and put a coin in one of the dumplings. The person who gets the lucky dumpling receives a certain amount of money.

Before the New Year homes are decorated with pictures and poems, all prominently featuring the color red which is supposed to be good luck. Houses are cleaned thoroughly to get rid of the bad luck from the old year and prepare the house for incoming good luck. Some people even give parts of their house a new coat of red paint.

On New Year's Eve and all throughout the holiday (though mostly on New Year's Eve) people set off absolutely intense amounts of fireworks. These are supposed to scare away evil spirits (and the Nian) and plus they're fun. Heading up to the New Year little stands are set up all over to sell fireworks. They sell pieces that range from tiny crackers to huge balls shot from mortars that you swear belong on the battlefield. Nothing reminds you that you are alive like seeing the jolt from

a firecracker you've just lit. Especially when the explosion was big enough to take off your hand. Fireworks are banned in some urban areas, though Beijing has recently lifted its ban. Take that, evil spirits!

New Year's Eve is not necessarily a time when you go out. Like Christmas in many Western countries, it is a time to be spent with family. (Though perhaps you and your family are blowing up a small piece of the nation together.) Many, many Chinese people stay in with their families on New Year's Eve and watch the CCTV (China's main television station) New Year's Eve Gala. It is an hours-long program that features a never-ending series of comedic performances. While most Chinese people keep it on during their family gathering, many of them are only half watching it. They spend this time joking, eating melon seeds, and gossiping until midnight. It is considered bad form to go to bed before midnight.

While Chinese New Year is a very important holiday, you may be surprised by how few people are out on New Year's Eve. Remember that there are also very few people that go out on Christmas Eve in Western countries. Everyone is at home with their families.

The rest of the Spring Festival is spent resting, visiting relatives, receiving red packets with money (if you are young), and generally getting fat. There is a week-long national holiday during this time and almost everybody, except some poor saps in the service industry, has off. Do not try to travel during this time. (Didn't we mention the world's largest human migration?) Just find a place you like beforehand and enjoy the festivities.

QUICK TIP 2

As you are certainly aware, the Chinese zodiac follows a set of 12 years. The order as well as the next time that year occurs is listed below:

Chinese

Romanization

English (Year)

鼠 (shǔ) - rat, mouse (2008)

牛(niú) - ox, cow (2009)

虎(hǔ) - tiger (2010)

兔(tù) - rabbit (2011)

龙(lóng) - dragon (2012)

蛇(shé) - snake (2013)

马(mǎ) - horse (2014)

羊(yáng) - sheep, goat (2015)

猴(hóu) - monkey (2016)

鸡(jī) - rooster, chicken (2017)

狗(gǒu) - dog (2018)

猪(zhū) - pig (2007, 2019)

You can use these to calculate what year you are. Many Chinese people will ask you what your Chinese Zodiac year is and it may impress them if you can remember it. Remember that the Chinese year does not actually start until the Spring Festival. Thus, if you were born in January, 1983, your sign is the dog, not the pig. It did not become the year of the pig until February, 1983.

The Chinese are not ones to limit themselves and do not stick only to the Chinese zodiac. Many young Chinese people are very interested in the Western zodiac and may know much more about it than you do. Starting in Japan in the 1970's, grouping personalities by blood type has also become very popular in Asia. Younger Chinese people will often ask your blood type as a window into what kind of person you are. Thus it is helpful to come to China with all three pieces of information prepared.

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Lesson 58: Tones
声调 shēngdiào

LESSON NOTES

In fact, Chinese is not a particularly hard language. The beginning, the time when you are first learning, is enough to make anyone cry, but once you get past the two major hurdles, once you adapt to the idea of a tonal and pictographic language, the rest is just memorization. Chinese grammar is exceedingly simple. It is nothing in comparison to English grammar. English, and many other languages, seems easy to learn at first, but, if you want to speak like a native speaker, it is almost impossible. People who have lived in America for most of their lives still make small grammatical errors that give them away as non-native speakers. Chinese grammar contains none of these complex permutations. Words are just thrown together in sentences. Word order is very formulaic, and also reasonably flexible. Plus there's no conjugating anything. Chinese people often complain about all the tenses in English. Why do you need all these different configurations of verbs? they ask. Chinese gets by without ever changing the way a verb, or any other word, is said. This makes it very easy to copy the way native speakers speak. The hardest part is getting the pronunciation right.

But, even in this area, there is a lot of space to move. That there are so many people speaking so many different dialects in China works to your advantage. Many native Chinese-speakers grew up speaking a dialect other than Mandarin and thus don't have standard pronunciation. Many people mistake Michael for a Chinese person on the phone. Yes, his Chinese is good, but a big part of why they do this is that Chinese people are used to giving leeway in pronunciation, they are used to hearing people who pronounce words differently than they do. "Yes," Michael responds when people say he sounds like a Chinese person, "like a Chinese person, but not quite a Beijinger." "Oh, no. Not quite a Beijinger," they say. Beijingers are the standard for Mandarin pronunciation. "Maybe someone from Hunan," they offer. The bar for pronunciation is set low in China.

That being said, all dialects of Chinese are tonal, thus Chinese people all know how to wrap their vocal chords around pitch inflections. This is something you need to practice. You might be able to get by, kind of, without learning tones, but you won't ever have anything bordering on meaningful conversation.

In Mandarin, the national, standard dialect of Chinese, there are four tones. (Some other dialects have more tones. Cantonese, for example, has eight.) Chinese people number the tones and talk about them as "first tone," "second tone," "third tone," and "fourth tone." "Tone" in Chinese is "shēngdiào." "Shēng" means "sound" or "voice" and "diào" means "transfer" or "shift." "Shēngdiào" can refer to tone in the larger sense, as in the sound of a musical instrument or someone's singing voice, but it is also the word that refers specifically to the tones of Chinese

characters. We will not only refer to tones by their numbers, but we will also give them names based on the way the pitch changes. This should, hopefully, make them easier to remember. Using the romanization system of Chinese, called pinyin, the tones are noted by placing different accent marks above the vowels in a word. These accent mark directly reflect the change of inflection called for by the tone.

The first tone is the flat tone. When saying words with the first tone your pitch does not change. You start out somewhat high and stay there, holding it. This is also sometimes called the singing tone, because holding this tone is like holding a note when singing. This tone is signified with a flat, horizontal line above a vowel: "ā." In Chinese, "first tone" is "yīshēng." "Yī" means "one" and "shēng" means "sound." All the Chinese names for the tones follow this pattern: a number and then the word for "sound" or "voice."

The second tone is the rising tone. It starts out below the first tone and then rises up in pitch. Michael pulled out the length of the tone in order to try to demonstrate how the sound moves, but you don't have to make it that long. It is important that, in order to differentiate the second tone from other tones, namely the third tone, you make sure the tone only goes up. It should not stay flat or go down at any point. Michael, in his attempt to stretch it out for you to hear, has sometimes allowed it to start out a little flat and this can be confusing to the Chinese ear. There is no need for this tone to be long, and most Chinese pronounce very quickly. Second tone is symbolized by a rising line above a vowel: "á." In Chinese, "second tone" is "èrshēng." "Èr" means "two."

The third tone is the falling-rising tone. The tone starts out somewhere below the level of the first tone, then comes down rather low, becoming kind of guttural, before rising up again to at least the level of its origin. The third tone is usually the most difficult for English-speakers. The most important part of this tone is getting your voice down lower. If you pull your pitch from a normal level down into your throat while saying a word, you find that it often rises naturally at the end. Thus if you just concentrate on the deep part of this sound you can often trick yourself into saying the whole tone somewhat correctly and get something which Chinese people will recognize as third tone. The third tone is symbolized by a v-shape above a vowel: "ǎ." In Chinese, "third tone" is "sānshēng." "Sān" means "three."

The fourth tone is the falling tone. You start out high, like a first tone, but then fall rapidly. A lot of people think this sounds like a first tone, only one that is said very quickly. Whatever it sounds like to you, that is okay, but you must remember to make the tone fall. Perhaps it is that English-speakers naturally cause their pitch to fall when saying a word rapidly, as Michael demonstrated by comparing the fourth tone to the tone one uses in English to make an annoyed order. One must remember though, that it is possible possible to say a very quick, short first tone, where your pitch does not move. It is thus important to pay attention to your pitch and make sure it is actually falling. The fourth tone is denoted by a falling dash over a vowel: "à." "Fourth tone" in Chinese is "sìshēng." "Sì" means "four."

Those are the tones. We must remind you how absolutely central tones are to the Chinese language. To begin with, Chinese is a language full of homophones, words that sound exactly the same. Thus Chinese people are used to differentiating words based on context, but if you don't pronounce the tone, you've made your word at least four times harder to understand. You have to remember, Chinese people are not used to people not pronouncing the tone. The tone, for them, is a normal part of how one indicates different words. It would be similar to pronouncing all f's, h's, s's, and m's as f in English. Try it. Yes, you could sometimes guess what somebody was saying if they did this, especially if you were aware of their problem beforehand, but, out

of the blue, their speech would be generally unintelligible. Not pronouncing tones in Chinese is probably even worse of a handicap than what we just mentioned. This is why you may feel like you are pronouncing the word for "bike tire" correctly, you may be point at bicycle tires, but the man at the repair shop still stares at you blankly. "What? Great Wall of China?"

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
声调	shēngdiào	tone
一声	yīshēng	first tone, the flat tone
二声	èrshēng	second tone, the rising tone
三声	sānshēng	third tone, the falling-rising tone
四声	sìshēng	fourth tone, the falling tone

QUICK TIP

The tone mark is always placed over the vowel in a word, but some words have two vowels. In these cases the mark is written over the vowel that opens your mouth the most. Thus "i" never gets the tone mark if it is with another vowel. "A" always gets the tone mark when it is with other vowels. Here are some examples: "liù," "shǎo," "qiē," "shòu," "cuò." That should give you enough of an idea. Of course, placing the tone mark over the wrong vowel would never actually cause any confusion anyway.

QUICK TIP 2

As is true with all languages, many people learn to read and write first, or at least they learn their basics from books. While listening to podcasts is a little better than a book, it is still something else entirely to speak and communicate with other people. You need to be brave and make this step. You will learn the most when you are in situations where you have to use Chinese to communicate, where it is no longer something you just play around with, but a real medium for meaning. No matter how embarrassing or tough it may be, you have to make an effort to talk to Chinese people in China if you want your Chinese to get better. The best situation is talking to people who speak little or no English. Then you are really forced to learn communication skills.

That being said, let us suggest that you try to find other Chinese learners to practice with. You will find these situations much less stressful, as both of you are coming from the same position and you both probably understand the need to speak clearly and slowly. In addition, you are likely to have very similar vocabularies and will use only what's necessary to communicate your meaning. One may often lose what a native speaker is saying because of embellishments.

The best situation is to find a fellow Chinese-learner who does not speak English. In China there are many Japanese, Russians, and Koreans, especially Koreans, learning Chinese. Some of them have somewhat good English, but you will find many people who are more comfortable communicating in Chinese. It sometimes feels rather silly to speak to a fellow English-speaker in Chinese, especially when you know you could be communicating much more easily. This is not so with a Korean who does not speak English. They have the advantages of both worlds. They

will speak slowly and use basic vocabulary, but it is still necessary that you use Chinese if you hope to communicate. Perhaps their pronunciation will not be exactly right, but, if you are going to be in China for a while, these kinds of friends make a comfortable incubator to sustain you between your ventures among Chinese people. Plus, you can exchange stories about how weird China is.

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Lesson 59: Have a Great Trip! (Bonus)

Best of Luck!

LESSON NOTES

Hi guys, (And girls. Though I really think "guys," when plural, is a unisex way of addressing people. My boss says I'm going to catch a lot of flak for this.)

First of all, I want to say thank you if you have made it this far in the podcasts. I listened to my taped thank you message and it sounds very rushed and kind of insincere. Thinking back on the time when we were recording the podcasts, it probably was very rushed. The podcasts were done on kind of a whim. It was a part time job that I found while stopping in Tokyo for a few months. All 60 lessons had to be done before I got the boat back to China. We recorded the last corrections the day before I left. I had already moved out of my apartment and was living in a friend's house with all my stuff crammed in my backpack.

By the time the podcasts started to come out I was already back in Beijing. There's a lot I wish I could change about them; tips I wish I'd put in, times when I think my pronunciation wasn't clear, phrases that I later realized you should have. I tried to put all these things in the PDFs that accompany the lessons. I know the PDFs refer to me in third person. I wish I hadn't decided to write them that way. Having to use third person made for some really awkward sentences.

Since this is the last time I'm going to be addressing you guys, the bosses suggested I give you the best pieces of advice I can think of. I'm kind of drawing a blank. The best advice I can give is something very simple, though perhaps some people will find it a little off-putting. It goes: Don't be a lazy wimp.

You made it to China. Did you come all this way to eat McDonald's, drink Starbucks, and join other foreigners in whining about the locals and their living conditions? Yes, China can be a bit dirty, the food is spicy, people don't speak English and some of them like to spit. There, I've said it. Now you know before you get here. You can't feign shock and horror when people are a little, or sometimes very, rude and there is garbage on the street. It is your decision to come here and, to some degree, you know what you're getting into. I wish I could curse in this thank you note. Being a New Yorker, I feel I need vulgar language to express this next sentiment: China is freaking amazing! Don't let yourself miss it because you stayed in a little foreigner bubble, because you spent your whole time eating in hotel lobbies, being carted around from sight to sight, and having drinks in expensive bars. Get out of your safe zone: eat street food, go to little restaurants, start up conversations with anyone who is willing to try to communicate with you, go out of your way to meet locals, watch the people on the street closely.

That's really the best tip I have for you: Remember that you're in China. Every once in a while think about that. Say it to yourself as you walk down the street, "I'm in China." Isn't that kind of ridiculous? When you were five would you ever have imagined yourself in China? It's hilarious isn't it.

Make friends with people who don't speak English. This is the way you really learn a language. It is only when you are forced to communicate that you really learn how to. If you always stay around English speakers, if you've always got this crutch, then Chinese will be nothing more than a little trick you pull to get cheap souvenirs. And, more importantly, if you meet locals, you will actually be interacting with China; with the real China that most Chinese people live in, touch, and smell everyday. China is more than big stores and a really long wall. It is more than crowds of smiling spectators who giggle at you. You won't know unless you try to communicate. You can't ever feel the sincere and defensive Chinese patriotism, the uninhibited exuberance of Chinese drinking partners, or the bold, matter-of-fact, and yet sometimes shockingly tender curiosity that comes out in Chinese life. If you leave China with no Chinese friends, then you've really missed out. This isn't to say that one should always avoid nice hotels and bars with foreigners in them. Heck, sometimes I would kill to hear an American accent calling out, "Cheers!" But it's important to remember that cheap beer and cheap food is not all there is to China. Plus, if you stick to the foreign places, it won't really be that cheap.

Eat like a Chinese person. My friend David visited me and we spent the whole time eating on the street and in little dirty restaurants. We made sure to wash it down with Chinese baijiu (112 proof Chinese liquor) to kill any bacteria there might be. (Chinese people do actually have a habit of consuming baijiu whenever they have seafood to counteract anything in the seafood that might possibly make you sick.) David went to the Great Wall by himself. I was busy writing PDFs for the site. David came back tired as hell, but laughing. "There was this guy who kept complaining about China," David reported. "He said he threw up all over the Great Wall. He kept saying China was too dirty and cursing the people who made his omlette at his hotel." Are you coming to China to have omelettes? Actually, I understand that the hardest part of your diet to change is often breakfast, but you'd be amazed how many delicious things there are out there. Just bring your "Wǒ yào zhège." ("I want this.") and you're totally prepared for street food. Don't be afraid of eating everything and anything, it won't hurt you. The only thing I don't eat is fresh fruit on a stick that they sell on the street. And that has only made me sick once in over a year of eating it.

So that's it. Don't sleep, go out. Don't turn down food and drinks. Don't forget to remind yourself what's going on. You're in China, for God's sake. When is this going to happen again? Look at the sky, the buildings, the busses, the people around you, and laugh out loud. Then go talk to Chinese people. Take the bus with them. Take the hard sleeper. Offer them an orange. They will more than repay you and you won't forget it.

I really hope you enjoyed the podcasts. I hope you learned something. But, most of all, I hope this is the start of a wonderful adventure. When was the last time you had an adventure? Aren't you due for one?

Sincerely,

Michael

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