



# Lesson 1 Nǐ hǎo *Hello*

## Communication goals

- Learn culturally appropriate greetings in formal situations
- Give basic information about yourself

## Key structures

NP shì NP

yes-no questions with **ma**

negation with **bù**

yě + VP

hěn + AdjV



## Dialogue

The Situation: The “new student reception” in a study-abroad program in China attended by teachers and new students. The students have come from countries around the world to continue their Chinese language study and to learn more about Chinese culture. The setting is relatively formal, and most of the students are meeting each other for the first time.



### Part A

Xiǎo Zhāng: Nǐ hǎo.

Xiǎo Gāo: Nǐ hǎo.

Xiǎo Zhāng: Wǒ shì xuésheng. Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?

Xiǎo Gāo: Shì. Wǒ yě shì xuésheng.

### Part B

Xiǎo Zhāng: Tā shì xuésheng ma?

Xiǎo Gāo: Bù shì. Tā bù shì xuésheng. Tā shì lǎoshī. Tā shì Lǐ lǎoshī.

### Part C

Xiǎo Gāo: Lǎoshī hǎo.

Lǐ lǎoshī: Xiǎo Gāo, nǐ hǎo ma?

Xiǎo Gāo: Wǒ hěn hǎo, xièxie.

Lǐ lǎoshī: Zài jiàn.



## Vocabulary

bù	negation	<i>no, not</i>
Gāo	family name	<i>(family name)</i>
hǎo	adjectival verb	<i>good</i>
hěn	intensifier	<i>very</i>
lǎoshī	noun	<i>teacher, professor</i>
Lǐ	family name	<i>(family name)</i>
ma	final particle	<i>(forms yes-no questions)</i>
nǐ	pronoun	<i>you</i>
nǐ hǎo	greeting	<i>hello (formal greeting)</i>
shì	stative verb	<i>be</i>
tā	pronoun	<i>he/him, she/her, it</i>
wǒ	pronoun	<i>I/me</i>
xiǎo	family name prefix	<i>*</i>
xièxie	conversational expression	<i>thank you</i>
xuésheng	noun	<i>student</i>
yě	adverb	<i>also</i>
zài jiàn	conversational expression	<i>goodbye</i>
Zhāng	family name	<i>(family name)</i>



## Dialogue practice

Do these activities in class after mastering each part of Dialogue 1.

**Dialogue 1A:** Pretend you are at the new student reception. Greet a classmate and find out if he is a student. Tell him that you are also a student.

**Dialogue 1B:** Choose an identity, either **xuésheng** or **lǎoshī**. Greet a classmate and find out if she is a student or a teacher. Your classmate should find out if you are a student or a teacher. Repeat until you have identified at least three classmates.

**Dialogue 1C:** Pair up with a classmate and take turns asking how you are. When you are done, say goodbye. Repeat the conversation with at least three more classmates.

## Use and structure

### 1.1. Family names and addressing friends

In this lesson we are introduced to two students, Mary Girard and David James, who are “studying abroad” in China. In this book we call them **Xiǎo Gāo** and **Xiǎo Zhāng**. **Gāo** and **Zhāng** are Chinese family names (surnames) that are similar in sound to their western family names. **Xiǎo + family name** is a form of address that is often used between friends who are about the same age, and it is also a way for an older person to address a younger friend. It is the way that these two students will address each other when they become friends. In Chinese, people do not address each other with the family name alone, and **Xiǎo Gāo** and **Xiǎo Zhāng** will never call each other **Gāo** and **Zhāng**. We will learn more about names in Lesson 3.

### 1.2. The Greeting **nǐ hǎo**

**Nǐ hǎo** is a greeting. We translate **nǐ hǎo** with the English expression *hello*, but it is more formal and more restricted in use than the greeting *hello* is in English. It can be used when meeting people for the first time in formal situations, and it is often used in business contexts, especially when answering the telephone. Students typically greet their teacher by saying **lǎoshī hǎo** *hello teacher (hello professor)* and teachers can greet a class of students by saying **xuésheng hǎo** *hello students*.

### 1.3. Pronouns

Mandarin pronouns have a single form that does not change whether the pronoun is used as subject or object. **Wǒ** means *I* or *me*. **Nǐ** means *you* (subject) or *you* (object). **Tā** means *he* or *him*, *she* or *her*, or *it*.



	subject	object
<i>first person</i>	wǒ <i>I</i>	wǒ <i>me</i>
<i>second person</i>	nǐ <i>you</i>	nǐ <i>you</i>
<i>third person</i>	tā <i>he/she/it</i>	tā <i>him/her/it</i>

#### 1.4. Shì *be*

**Shì** is the verb *be* in Mandarin. It links a subject with a noun or noun phrase.

<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>N/NP</b>
Wǒ	shì	xuésheng.
<i>I am (a) student.</i>		

Mandarin verbs have only one, unchanging form. Verbs do not change to mark tense or to agree with the subject. Thus, the same verb **shì** is used to indicate (I) *am*, (you) *are*, (he, she, it) *is*, *were*, and *was*.

Wǒ shì xuésheng.	<i>I am a student.</i>
Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?	<i>Are you a student?</i>
Tā shì lǎoshī.	<i>He/she is a teacher.</i>

#### 1.5. Word order and phrase order in the Mandarin sentence

The normal order of information in the Mandarin sentence is:

<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>
Tā	shì	xuésheng.
he/she	be	student
<i>He/she is a student.</i>		

#### 1.6. Asking yes-no questions with **ma**

Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?  
*Are you a student?*

Yes-no questions are questions that can be answered *yes* or *no*. Mandarin has a number of ways to form yes-no questions. The simplest way is to add the final particle **ma** to the end of a statement. You can think of **ma** as adding the meaning “*yes or no?*” to the sentence. The word order in statements and in yes-no questions with **ma** is the same:

<b>S</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>(ma)</b>
Tā	shì	xuésheng.	
he/she	be	student	
<i>He/she is a student.</i>			
Tā	shì	xuésheng	ma?
he/she	be	student	yes or no
<i>Is he/she a student?</i>			



### 1.7. Answering *yes*

There is no word for *yes* in Mandarin. When answering *yes* to a yes-no question, repeat the verb that is used in the question. The verb is underlined in the following example.

Q: Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?

A: Wǒ shì xuésheng.

To give the short answer *yes*, just repeat the verb:

Q: Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?

A: Shì.

### 1.8. Yě *also*

*Yě also* is an adverb. It always occurs before a verb or verb phrase, and never before a noun or at the end of a sentence. *Yě* occurs before negation. For more on negation, see Use and Structure note 1.9.

(S) yě + V(P)

Wǒ yě shì xuésheng.

*I am also a student.*

### 1.9. Answering *no* and saying *no*

Mandarin has two words for *no*. In this lesson we learn one of them: **bù**. **Bù** negates most verbs. It occurs right before the verb or verb phrase.

Tā **bù** shì xuésheng. *She is not a student.*

If the sentence contains *yě also*, *yě* occurs before **bù**:

Tā yě **bù** shì xuésheng. *She is also not a student.*

To give a short answer *no*, just say **bù** + the verb:

Q: Tā shì xuésheng ma? *Is she a student?*

A: **Bù shì**. *No.*

We will learn the other commonly used word for *no* in Lesson 4.

### 1.10. Names and titles: Lǐ lǎoshī

Lǐ lǎoshī means *Teacher Li*, or, in common American usage, *Professor Li*. Lǐ, like **Gāo** and **Zhāng**, is a family name. Lǎoshī *teacher* is a title. In Mandarin, a title always follows the family name.

**1.11. Greeting vs. question: Nǐ hǎo and nǐ hǎo ma?**

Nǐ hǎo *hello* is a greeting (Use and Structure note 1.2). You can respond to the greeting nǐ hǎo by saying nǐ hǎo. In contrast, nǐ hǎo ma? is a yes-no question, and it requires an answer. If you are all right, you respond to this question by saying wǒ hěn hǎo *I'm fine (I'm okay)*.

**1.12. Adjectival verbs: Hǎo good**

Hǎo *good* is translated into English as an adjective, but in Mandarin it can function as the main verb in the sentence. Therefore, we call hǎo an adjectival verb. All but a few English adjectives function as adjectival verbs in Mandarin. Notice that adjectival verbs do not occur with the verb shì *be*.

Say this:

Wǒ hěn hǎo.

*I am fine.*

Do not say this:

⊗ Wǒ shì hěn hǎo.

**1.13. Intensifier + adjectival verb: Hěn hǎo very good**

Hěn *very* indicates the intensity of an adjectival verb. Therefore, we call it an intensifier. Words like *too, somewhat, extremely*, etc. are also intensifiers, and we will learn their Mandarin equivalents in later lessons.

Mandarin intensifiers occur right before the adjectival verb: hěn hǎo *very good*.

Mandarin intensifiers are always negated with bù.

In Mandarin, adjectival verbs are typically preceded by either an intensifier or negation. When intensity is not emphasized, the intensifier hěn is used. In other words, hěn sometimes is used to contribute the meaning *very*, and sometimes it is used in a sentence in order to satisfy the requirement that the adjectival verb has to be preceded by something. You can always translate hěn as *very*.

## Sentence pyramids

*The sentence pyramids illustrate the use of each new vocabulary item and structure introduced in the lesson. Use them to help you learn how to form phrases and sentences in Mandarin. Supply the English translation for the last line where indicated.*

I.

hǎo

Nǐ hǎo.

*good, well*

*Hello.*





2. xuésheng shì xuésheng Nǐ shì xuésheng.	student be a student You are a student.
3. xuésheng shì xuésheng Wǒ shì xuésheng.	student be a student I am a student.
4. shì xuésheng Tā shì xuésheng.	be a student He/she is a student.
5. ma shì xuésheng ma? Nǐ shì xuésheng ma?	(yes-no question particle) be a student, yes or no? Are you a student?
6. shì xuésheng yě shì xuésheng Wǒ yě shì xuésheng.	be a student also be a student _____
7. shì xuésheng bù shì xuésheng Tā bù shì xuésheng.	be a student not be a student He/she is not a student.
8. lǎoshī shì lǎoshī Tā shì lǎoshī.	teacher be a teacher _____
9. shì lǎoshī shì lǎoshī ma? Nǐ shì lǎoshī ma?	be a teacher be a teacher, yes or no? _____
10. ma Nǐ hǎo ma?	(yes-no question particle) Are you okay?
11. xièxie Wǒ hěn hǎo, xièxie.	thanks, thank you I am fine, thanks.







12. lǎoshī shì lǎoshī bù shì lǎoshī Wǒ bù shì lǎoshī.	teacher be a teacher not be a teacher _____
13. hǎo Lǎoshī hǎo.	good Hello teacher. (Hello professor.)
14. hǎo Xuésheng hǎo.	good Hello students.
15. Zhāng Xiǎo Zhāng shì Xiǎo Zhāng Tā shì Xiǎo Zhāng.	Zhang (family name) Xiao Zhang be Xiao Zhang _____
16. Gāo Xiǎo Gāo shì Xiǎo Gāo shì Xiǎo Gāo ma? Nǐ shì Xiǎo Gāo ma?	Gao (family name) Xiao Gao be Xiao Gao be Xiao Gao, yes or no? _____
17. Xiǎo Gāo shì Xiǎo Gāo Wǒ shì Xiǎo Gāo. Shì. Wǒ shì Xiǎo Gāo.	Xiao Gao be Xiao Gao I am Xiao Gao. Yes. I am Xiao Gao.
18. lǎoshī Lǐ lǎoshī shì Lǐ lǎoshī Tā shì Lǐ lǎoshī.	teacher, professor Professor Li be Professor Li He is Professor Li.
19. hǎo hěn hǎo Tā hěn hǎo.	good very good (okay) She is okay.





## Pronunciation and Pinyin

### Introduction to the parts of the Mandarin syllable

The Mandarin syllable can be described in terms of three parts: an initial consonant, a final, and a tone. Syllables need not begin with an initial consonant, so we put the initial consonant in parentheses here.

TONE	
(initial consonant)	final

A basic overview of the Mandarin syllable is presented at the beginning of this book. In this and the following lessons we select a group of sounds for additional practice. In this lesson we focus on the four Mandarin contour tones and on initials and finals that appear in this lesson's Chinese vocabulary.

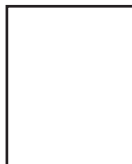
### Tones

#### The four contour tones

In Mandarin, tones are a feature of pronunciation like consonants and vowels, and they serve to distinguish the meaning of a syllable. Tone involves the pitch of the syllable, and contour tones are tones in which the pitch has a particular shape, for example, level, falling, or rising, across the syllable. Mandarin has four contour tones and we look at their basic forms in this lesson. In Pinyin, contour tones are usually indicated with the following tone marks written over a vowel in the syllable: ˉ ˊ ˋ ˋ̌. There are also rules for the placement of tone marks over the appropriate vowel. Tones are sometimes indicated with the numbers 1–4 following the syllable, with 1 representing first tone, etc. Here are diagrams of the four contour tones of Mandarin, along with words in each tone that are introduced in Lesson 1. The diagrams indicate the pitch contour of each tone.

#### First tone (1<sup>st</sup> tone, level tone)


First tone starts high and remains high and level throughout the pronunciation of the syllable. It is also called a level tone.

	Gāo (lǎo)shī shēng tā Zhāng
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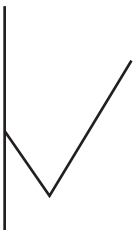
**Second tone (2<sup>nd</sup> tone, rising tone)**

Second tone starts low and rises throughout the pronunciation of the syllable. It is also called a rising tone.

	xué(sheng)
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**Third tone (3<sup>rd</sup> tone, falling-rising tone)**

The basic form of third tone starts at medium pitch, drops to low pitch, and then rises. It is also called a falling-rising tone.

	hǎo lǎo(shī) nǐ wǒ yě xiǎo hěn
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------

**Fourth tone (4<sup>th</sup> tone, falling tone)**

Fourth tone starts high and falls across the pronunciation of the syllable. It is also called a falling tone.

	bù shì zài jiàn xiè(xie)
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Tone distinguishes the meaning of syllables in the same way that consonants and vowels do. Two syllables with different tones mean different things, even if the consonants and vowels are identical. Here are some examples:

mā	mom	fāng	square
má	hemp	fáng	house
mǎ	horse	fǎng	imitate
mà	scold	fàng	put (something) down



### Rules for the placement of tone marks in Pinyin

The conventions of Pinyin spelling specify the location of the tone mark in the syllable. The tone mark is always placed over a vowel. To determine the vowel that receives the tone mark, apply the following rules in this order:

1. If the syllable contains only one vowel, the tone mark occurs over that vowel. Examples: **bù** *no, not*, **nǐ** *you*, **tā** *he/him, she/her, it*.
2. If the syllable contains **a** or **e**, the tone mark is placed over the **a** or the **e**. Examples: **Gāo** (*family name*), **xué(sheng)** *student*, **(nǐ) hǎo** *hello*.
3. If the final is **ou**, the tone mark occurs over the **o**. Examples (from Lessons 2–4): **dōu**, **yǒu**.
4. Otherwise, the tone mark is placed over the last vowel in the syllable. Examples (from Lessons 2–3): **shuō**, **guó**, **duì**.

### Tone change for the word **bù** *no, not*

When **bù** occurs before another syllable with fourth tone, it changes to second tone (rising tone). Here is the rule that summarizes this change:

**bù + 4 → bú + 4**  
**bù duì → bú duì**

In this textbook we will always write **bù** in its original fourth tone.

### Initial consonants

Here is a table of Mandarin initial consonants. In this lesson we focus on the highlighted groups of initial consonants.

<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>g</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>zh</b>	<b>z</b>
<b>p</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>k</b>	<b>q</b>	<b>ch</b>	<b>c</b>
<b>m</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>h</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>sh</b>	<b>s</b>
<b>f</b>	<b>l</b>			<b>r</b>	

When consonants are recited in Mandarin (as the alphabet is recited in English in the form of the ABC's), each group of consonants is followed by a particular “recitation” vowel. When we illustrate syllables with each consonant, the first example will be the recitation form of the consonant with its recitation vowel.

### **b, p, m, f**

**b, p, m**, and **f** are pronounced similar to the way they are in English. Here are examples of Mandarin syllables that begin with **b, p, m**, and **f**.

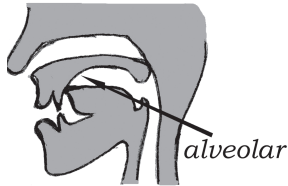


**b** bō, bā, bǐ, bù, bāo, bāng  
**p** pō, pà, pī, pǔ, pào, pàng  
**m** mō, mā, mǐ, mù, máo, máng  
**f** fō, fā, fù, fáng



## d, t, n, l

**d, t, n,** and **l** are pronounced very similar to the way they are in English. They differ primarily in that, in Mandarin, the tongue is slightly more forward than in English during the pronunciation of the sounds. Here are examples of Mandarin syllables that begin with **d, t, n,** and **l**.



**d** dē, dǎ, dì, dú, dào, dāng  
**t** tē, tā, tì, tǔ, tāo, táng  
**n** nē, nà, nǐ, nǚ, nào  
**l** lē, lā, lí, lù, lǎo

## Finals

Here are the finals of Mandarin as they are spelled in Pinyin. The finals introduced in Lesson 1 are highlighted.

<i>Finals that begin with:</i>	<i>and end with a vowel:</i>	<i>and end with n:</i>	<i>and end with ng:</i>	<i>and end with r:</i>
<b>a</b>	<b>a</b> , <b>ai</b> , <b>ao</b>	<b>an</b>	<b>ang</b>	
<b>e</b>	e, ei	<b>en</b>	<b>eng</b>	er
<b>o</b>	<b>(o)</b> , ou		ong	
<b>i</b>	<b>i</b> , ia, <b>iao</b> , <b>ie</b> , iu/iou	<b>ian</b> , in	iang, ing, iong	
<b>ü</b>	ü, <b>üe</b>	üan, ün		
<b>u</b>	<b>u</b> , ua, uai, ui/uei, <b>uo</b>	uan, uen	uang, ueng	

## Notes on pronunciation and Pinyin spelling

### i

#### Pronunciation

- The letter **i** in Pinyin represents three different vowel sounds. In this lesson we meet two of them. When **i** follows the initial consonants **zh**, **ch**, **sh** or **r** it is pronounced with a strong **r** (or **er**) as in the English word *her* or *hammer*. Example: **lǎoshī**. When **i** begins a syllable or follows most other consonants it is pronounced like the English sound *ee* in words like *week* and *sleep*. Example: **nǐ** you. We will learn a syllable with the third pronunciation of **i** in Lesson 3.

#### Spelling

- If the final begins with **i** and there is no initial consonant, **i** is spelled as **y**. Example: **yě** also.



## ü

### Pronunciation

- The letter **ü** represents a sound that does not occur in English, a high front rounded vowel. It stands in contrast to the vowel **i** (pronounced *ee* as in *week* and *sleep*), differing from it only in the position of the lips when the vowel is pronounced. To pronounce **ü**, position your mouth to say **i** (*ee*) and then without moving anything but your lips, round your lips as if to say *oo* as in *loop*. The high front rounded vowel **ü** also occurs in French and many other languages besides Mandarin.

### Spelling

- If the final begins with **ü** and there is no initial consonant, **ü** is spelled as **yu**. We have not yet learned any words that illustrate this rule.
- If the final begins with **ü** and the initial consonant is **j**, **q**, or **x**, **ü** is written as **u** but it is pronounced **ü**. Example: **xuésheng** *student*.

## uo

### Pronunciation

- **uo** is pronounced like the syllable *aw* in the English words *awful* or *saw*.

### Spelling

- If the final is **uo** and there is no initial consonant, **uo** is spelled as **wo**. Example: **wǒ** *I/me*.
- If the initial consonant is **b**, **p**, **m**, or **f**, the sound **uo** is spelled as **o**. Example: the recitation syllables **bo**, **po**, **mo**, **fo**. The letter **o** only occurs as a simple final following **b**, **p**, **m**, and **f**, so we place it in parentheses in the Finals table.

## e

### Pronunciation

- The letter **e** occurs in eight finals and has three different pronunciations.
- **e** is pronounced similar to the vowel in the English word *up*. Example: the recitation syllables **de**, **te**, **ne**, **le**, and the pronunciation of **e** in the final **er**.
- **eng** rhymes with the English word *sung*. Example: **(xué)sheng** *student*.
- **ei**, **üe** and **en** are pronounced as the vowel in the English word *send*. Example: **yě** *also*.

### Spelling

- When **e** is preceded by the vowel **i** and **i** is not preceded by a consonant, **ie** is spelled **ye**. Example: **yě** *also*.



## ian, üan

### Pronunciation

- The finals **ian** and **üan** rhyme with **en** and not with **an**.

### Spelling

- When **ian** is not preceded by a consonant, it is spelled **yan**. Example: **j** + **iàn** = **jiàn**, **iǎn** alone is spelled **yǎn**.
- When **üan** is not preceded by a consonant, it is spelled **yuan**. When preceded by a consonant it is spelled **uan**. Example: **j** + **üǎn** = **juǎn**, **üǎn** alone is spelled **yuǎn**.

## Language FAQs (frequently asked questions)

### Where are *the* and *a*?

Mandarin does not have words that are exactly equivalent to *a* and *the* in English. Do not look for translations of *a* and *the* in Mandarin.

## Notes on Chinese culture

### Greeting strangers

In Chinese culture, it is not common to greet people you do not know, unless you expect to interact with them in the future. People greet strangers in a business context, or in receptions such as the one in the dialogue in this lesson, since the initial contact will probably lead to future interactions. It is very uncommon to greet a stranger you pass on the street, or who you ride with in an elevator or on some form of public transportation.





## Lesson 1 Dialogue in English

### Part A

Xiao Zhang: Hello.

Xiao Gao: Hello.

Xiao Zhang: I am a student. Are you a student?

Xiao Gao: Yes. I am also a student.

### Part B

Xiao Zhang: Is he a student?

Xiao Gao: No. He is not a student. He is a teacher. He is Professor Li.

### Part C

Xiao Gao: Hello teacher.

Professor Li: Xiao Gao, how are you?

Xiao Gao: I am fine, thanks.

Professor Li: Goodbye.