

Hanyu Pinyin (汉语拼音)

Pinyin (拼音), or more formally **Hanyu Pinyin** (汉语拼音), is currently the most commonly used romanization system for standard Mandarin. Pinyin means the phonetic transcription of Chinese characters based on the English alphabet.

Vowels

ā á ǎ à

ē é ě è

ī í ǐ ì

ō ó ǒ ò

ū ú ǔ ù

ǖ ǘ ǚ ǜ

Pinyin

Pinyin did not come into existence until mid-twentieth century. Literally meaning “adding sounds together”, pinyin is a Romanized way to mark the pronunciation of Chinese words. The pronunciation of a Chinese word is usually formed by two parts, one initial followed by one or two finals. Initials act in a similar way to consonants in English, while finals act in a similar way to vowels. Single Chinese words have only one to two syllables.

Pinyin (The Chinese Alphabet)

Initials:

b	p	m	f	d	t	n	l
(boss)	(pot)	(mop)	(fog)	(dirt)	(turf)	(nerd)	(lurk)
g	k	h	j	q	x		
(go)	(kerb)	(hurt)	(jeep)	(chi)	(she)		
zh	ch	sh	z	c	s		
(John)	(lunch)	(Sean)	(bids)	(hits)	(bus)		
r	y	w					
(rib)	(eat)	(woo)					

Finals:

a	o	e	i	u	ü	ai	ei	ui
(art)	(or)	(ago)	(eat)	(woo)	(phew)	(hi)	(ape)	(wait)
ao	ou	iu	ie	üe	er	an	en	in
(how)	(so)	(Euro)	(yes)	(ü+e)	(her)	(Ann)	(end)	(bin)
un	ün	ang	eng	ing	ong			
(when)	(shrink)	(sung)	(beng)	(thing)	(long)			

Mandarin Chinese Tones

Mandarin uses four tones to clarify the meanings of words. Since many characters have the same sound, tones are used to differentiate words from each other.

The four tones in Mandarin are:

- high level – first tone
- rising – second tone
- falling rising – third tone
- falling – fourth tone

Tone	Mark	Description
1st	mā	High and level.
2nd	má	Starts medium in tone, then rises to the top.
3rd	mǎ	Starts low, dips to the bottom, then rises toward the top.
4th	mà	Starts at the top, then falls sharp and strong to the bottom.
neutral	ma	Flat, with no emphasis.