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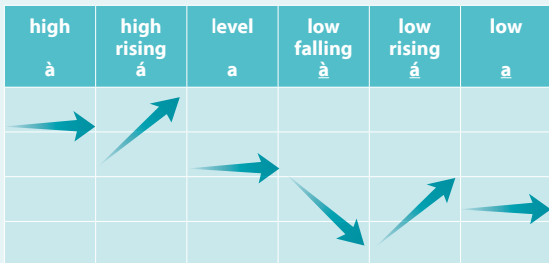
# Cantonese



# tones

Cantonese is a tonal language ('tonal quality' refers to the raising and lowering of pitch on certain syllables). Tones in Cantonese fall on vowels and on **n**. The same combination of sounds pronounced with different tones can have a very different meaning, eg **gwat** 掘 means 'dig up' and **gwàt** 骨 means 'bones'.

Cantonese has between six and 10 tones, depending on which definition you use. In our pronunciation guide they've been simplified to five tones, indicated with accents or underscores on the symbol letters (as shown in the tables below for the vowel 'a'), in addition to a sixth, level tone. Higher tones involve tightening the vocal cords to get a higher sounding pitch, while lower tones are made by relaxing the vocal cords to get a lower pitch. Bear in mind that the tones are relative to the natural vocal range of the speaker, eg the high tone is pronounced at the top of one's vocal range. Note also that some tones slide up or down in pitch.



Symbol	Tone	Example	
à	high	睇	tái
á	high rising	撈	nàu
a	level	角	gawk
à	low falling	人	yàn
á	low rising	被	páy
a	low	問	man