

Hunanese



tones

Hunanese is a tonal language ('tonal quality' refers to the raising and lowering of pitch on certain syllables). Tones in Hunanese fall on vowels and on **z**. The same combination of sounds pronounced with different tones can have a very different meaning.

Hunanese has six tones, including a neutral tone. In our pronunciation guide the six tones are indicated with accents or underscores on the letters, as shown in the table below for the vowel 'a'. Syllables with neutral tone are unmarked, and are usually pronounced in the middle of your natural pitch range.

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 high tones are pronounced towards the top of one's vocal range. Note also that some tones slide up or down in pitch.

rising á	high rising ā	mid flat a	falling à	low falling a	low rising ǎ