



Mandarin

PHRASEBOOK & DICTIONARY

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Look out for the following icons throughout the book:



'Shortcut' Phrase

Easy to remember alternative to the full phrase



Q&A Pair

'Question-and-answer' pair – we suggest a response to the question asked



Look For

Phrases you may see on signs, menus etc



Listen For

Phrases you may hear from officials, locals etc

LANGUAGE TIP

Language Tip

An insight into the foreign language

CULTURE TIP

Culture Tip

An insight into the local culture

How to read the phrases:

- Coloured words and phrases throughout the book are phonetic guides to help you pronounce the foreign language.
- Lists of phrases with tinted background are options you can choose to complete the phrase above them.

These abbreviations will help you choose the right words and phrases in this book:

a adjective
inf informal
lit literal

n noun
pl plural
pol polite

sg singular
v verb

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Learn about Mandarin, build your own sentences and pronounce words correctly.

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INTRO

Mandarin

普通话 Pǔtōnghuà

Who speaks Mandarin?



**OFFICIAL
LANGUAGE**
MAINLAND CHINA
TAIWAN
SINGAPORE

**WIDELY
UNDERSTOOD**
HONG KONG
MACAU
MALAYSIA

Why Bother

With more than one billion speakers worldwide, Mandarin is the most widely spoken language on the planet. How can you miss the chance to communicate with one in seven people on Earth?

Distinctive Sounds

In Mandarin you can change the meaning of a word by raising and lowering the pitch level (tone) on certain syllables. Mandarin has four tones (high, high-rising, high-falling and low falling-rising), plus a fifth, neutral tone.

840 million

Mandarin speakers
in China

one billion

Mandarin speakers
worldwide

Pinyin

Pinyin was officially adopted in 1958 as a way of writing Chinese using the Roman alphabet. Today in Chinese cities you'll see it everywhere: on maps, road and shop signs and in brand names.

Chinese Script

Many of the basic Chinese characters are pictographs (highly stylised pictures of what they represent), but most have a 'meaning' element and a 'sound' element. Each character represents a syllable, and most words consist of two characters.

Chinglish

'Chinglish' (Chinese English) provides many entertaining mistranslations – eg a 'Keep Quiet' notice might

instead read 'the subliminal of thought has started while the noisy has stopped'.

Language Family

The term 'Mandarin' refers to one of the seven Chinese dialect groups and is more accurately called Modern Standard Chinese or *Pǔtōnghuà* 普通话 (literally 'the common dialect'). Close relatives in the Sino-Tibetan family are the other six dialects: Gan, Hakka, Min, Wu, Xiang and Yue.

Must-Know Grammar

Mandarin doesn't have direct equivalents of 'yes' and 'no' used in isolation. Instead, to answer the question affirmatively, repeat the verb used in the question (eg *shì* 是 – 'be'). For a negative answer, add *bù* 不 (not) before the verb.

Donations to English

Quite a few – for example, *gung-ho*, *Japan*, *ketchup*, *kung fu*, *silk*, *t'ai chi*, *tea* ...