

User Guide to the Mandarin Chinese Vocabulary Course

Note about transliteration

The Mandarin words are transliterated using the *pin-yin* method of romanization. In this method the tones are represented by marks on the vowels that look like the hand movements that we're using:

- flat tone (green thumb out)
- ˊ rising tone (blue finger up)
- ˇ falling and rising tone (red 'V' for victory)
- ˋ falling tone (black finger down)

In addition, two dots are used above the letter 'u' (*ü*). This indicates that the 'u' should be pronounced like the 'oo' in 'moon', but while you say 'oo', shape your lips towards the 'i' sound in 'sit'.

Learning the tones using hand movements

Mandarin has four tones, plus a neutral non-tone, which are critical for communication. While there is considerable leeway for differences in pronunciation (many Chinese learn Mandarin as a second language) there is very little for tones. If your tone is off you won't be understood. Tones, when made user-friendly, are actually quite simple to grasp and integrate into your learning.

The method for learning the tones* which you will experience in this course is specifically designed to address all styles of language learning. It will permit your central nervous system to permanently create pathways that reflect your personal learning style (visual, kinaesthetic, auditory, etc.) and support you in effortless recall and usage of the correct tone at the proper moment in your communication. It works on a subconscious level. You will very quickly find that you are using the movements as a natural part of your learning. These movements work. They have been tested and refined on students without any previous knowledge of Mandarin from many different backgrounds and age levels (teens to the elderly). I encourage you to allow your hands to move with the movements. For some of you that will be essential. For others, this will be less essential. Trust whatever helps you. It will work for you as you permit it to do so.

In this method of teaching tones, each movement is linked to a tone and colour. Romanized Mandarin (*pin-yin*) is written with four distinct tones, which are shown with marks over the affected vowel. These marks are shown in brackets below. The tones are generally listed in the following order when taught and when words are listed in a dictionary.

*patent pending

First tone: (ˉ) long, steady tone.

Colour: Green.

Movement: Thumb out to side with closed fist.

Example: *zhōng* ('middle').



Second tone: (ˊ) rising tone.

Colour: Blue.

Movement: Index finger pointing up.

Example: *rén* ('person').



Third tone: (ˇ) falling–rising tone. This tone actually resembles a tick mark (UK) or check mark (US) (✓). It starts rather low, goes down a bit and then rises up to the level of the green tone.

Please pay close attention to the Chinese native speaker's demonstration of this tone.

Colour: Red.

Movement: Closed fist with index and middle fingers forming a V and pointing up.

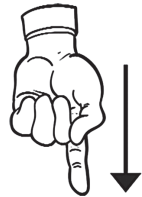
Example: *wǒ* ('I, me').



Fourth tone: (ˋ) falling tone. **Colour:** Black.

Movement: Index finger pointing down.

Example: *shì* ('to be, am, is, are').



Neutral non-tone: toneless.

Colour: None.

Movement: Closed fist.

Example: *ma* (question marker).

