

# Mandarin Chinese Pronunciation

David Chiang ([dchiang@nd.edu](mailto:dchiang@nd.edu)), April 2012

This sheet describes how to pronounce Chinese names and words when they are written using the standard Pinyin system (used by mainland Chinese) and when **you are speaking English**.

1. Easy initial consonants. The letters **b p m f d t n l g k h r w y** are as in English.

2. Tricky initial consonants. These are the most important ones to remember.

<b>j</b>	<b>zh</b>	like <i>j</i> in <i>Jack</i> , never as in <i>Jacques</i> !
<b>q</b>	<b>ch</b>	like <i>ch</i>
<b>x</b>	<b>sh</b>	like <i>sh</i>
	<b>z</b>	like <i>dz</i>
	<b>c</b>	like <i>ts</i>
	<b>s</b>	as in English

3. The following vowels can occur before another vowel. When they do, try to pronounce them smoothly, not as an extra syllable.

<b>i</b>	like <i>y</i> (or <i>j</i> in <i>fjord</i> )
<b>u</b>	like <i>u</i> in <i>quick</i>
<b>ü v</b>	like <i>u</i> in <i>cute</i>

4. The letter **a** is pronounced like *a* in *bla*, but after **y i ü**, like *e* in *bet*:

<b>yan</b>	<b>-ian</b>	<i>yen</i>
	<b>-üan</b>	<i>ywen</i>

It can also combine with a vowel after to form a single sound (a diphthong):

<b>ai</b>	like <i>ie</i> in <i>tie</i>
<b>ao</b>	like <i>ow</i> in <i>cow</i>

5. The letter **e** is usually similar to a schwa, like *a* in *about*, but after **y i ü**, like *e* in *bet*:

<b>ye</b>	<b>-ie</b>	<i>yeh</i>
<b>yue</b>	<b>-üe</b>	<i>yweh</i>

It can also combine with **i** after to form a single sound (a diphthong):

<b>ei</b>	like <i>ay</i> in <i>bay</i>
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6. The letter **o** is usually pronounced like *o* in *boat*. It is always used with another vowel. If it is written by itself, it is actually shorthand for **-uo**:

written as	stands for	pronounced as
<b>bo</b>	<b>buo</b>	<i>bwo</i>
<b>po</b>	<b>puo</b>	<i>pwo</i>
<b>mo</b>	<b>muo</b>	<i>mwo</i>
<b>fo</b>	<b>fuio</b>	<i>fwio</i>

It can also combine with **u** after to form a single sound (a diphthong):

**ou**                      like *oe* in *toe*

7. The letter **i** is usually pronounced like *ee* in *beet*. But after one of the letters in the second column of #2 above, it is silent. The consonant sound is pronounced as the whole syllable: **zhi chi shi ri zi ci si**.

8. The letter **u** is usually pronounced like *oo* in *boot*. But in the following cases, an extra sound is inserted:

written as	stands for	pronounced as
<b>-ui</b>	<b>-uei</b>	<i>way</i>
<b>-un</b>	<b>-uen</b>	<i>wen</i> in <i>Owen</i>
<b>-iu</b>	<b>-iou</b>	<i>yo</i>

And when it appears after one of the letters in the first column of #2 above, it is actually pronounced as **ü**.

written as	stands for
<b>ju-</b>	<b>jü-</b>
<b>qu-</b>	<b>qü-</b>
<b>xu-</b>	<b>xü-</b>
<b>yu-</b>	<b>yü-</b>

9. Finally, a word can end in **r** or **ng**, and these are pronounced just like in English.