PINYIN ROMANIZATION

"Pinyin", used in the People's Republic of China since 1958, is a system which uses the Latin alphabet to represent the sounds of Mandarin Chinese. Pinyin is used extensively in Mandarin dictionaries and phrasebooks. Here, the rules for pronouncing Mandarin pinyin are explained by comparing the sounds of Mandarin with those of Canadian English.

**Pinyin consonants which can begin a syllable**

- **b** is pronounced like *b* as in "bell", but is pronounced more lightly than in English.
- **c** is pronounced like *ts* as in "hats".
- **ch** is pronounced like *ch* as in "chalk", with the tongue curled back somewhat.
- **d** is pronounced like *d* as in "day", but is pronounced more lightly than in English.
- **f** is pronounced like *f* as in "five".
- **g** is pronounced like *g* as in "go", but is pronounced more lightly than in English.
- **h** is pronounced like *h* as in "how", but is pronounced further back in the throat, and is accompanied by a stronger puff of air than in English.
- **j** is pronounced like *j* as in "jeep", with the tongue forward.
- **k** is pronounced like *k* as in "kite", but is accompanied by a stronger puff of air than in English.
- **l** is pronounced like *l* as in "like".
- **m** is pronounced like *m* as in "month".
- **n** is pronounced like *n* as in "nine".
- **p** is pronounced like *p* as in "pen", but is accompanied by a stronger puff of air than in English.
- **q** is pronounced like *ch* as in "cheep", with the tongue forward.
- **r** is pronounced with the tongue curled back as for *l* in "laugh", but with the tip of the tongue not touching the roof of the mouth.
- **s** is pronounced like *s* as in "sand", but is pronounced more strongly than in English.
- **sh** is pronounced like *sh* as in "shop", with the tongue curled back somewhat.
- **t** is pronounced like *t* as in "ten", but is accompanied by a stronger puff of air than in English.
- **w** is pronounced like *w* as in "wood".
- **x** is pronounced like *sh* as in "sheep", with the tongue forward.
- **y** is pronounced like *y* as in "yes"; except that the syllable *yi* is pronounced like *ee* as in "bee".
z is pronounced like ds as in "weeds".

zh is pronounced like j as in "jam", with the tongue curled back somewhat.

**Pinyin vowels, and combinations of letters which can end a syllable**

a is pronounced like a as in "father".

ai is pronounced like i as in "fine".

an is pronounced like an as in "fan".

ang is pronounced like ong as in "gong".

ao is pronounced like ow as in "how".

e is pronounced like e as in French "le"; except after i or y, where it is pronounced like e as in "yet".

ê is pronounced like e as in "yet".

ei is pronounced like a as in "late."

en is pronounced somewhat like en as in "ten".

eng is pronounced like ung as in "rung".

er is pronounced somewhat like er as in "mermaid"; r is pronounced with the tongue curled back somewhat.

i After b, d, j, l, m, n, p, q, t and x, the letter i is pronounced like ee as in "bee".

However, after c, ch, r, s, sh, z and zh, the letter i is not pronounced like ee as in "bee". Instead, after the initial consonant has been pronounced, the position of the tongue remains unchanged, and a voiced sound is made. For example, si is pronounced like s as in "so", immediately followed by z as in "zoo".

ia is pronounced like yaw as in "yawn".

ian is pronounced like "yen".

iang is pronounced like y as in "yes", followed by ong as in "gong".

iao is pronounced like yow as in "yowl".

ie is pronounced like ye as in "yet".

in is pronounced like in as in "pin".
**ing** is pronounced like *ing* as in "sing".

**iong** is pronounced like *y* as in "yes", followed by *o* as in "note", followed by *ng* as in "ring".

**iu** is pronounced like *yo* as in "yodel".

**o** is pronounced somewhat like *o* as in "hot", but with the mouth not as wide open.

**ong** is pronounced like *o* as in "note", followed by *ng* as in "ring".

**ou** is pronounced like *o* as in "note".

**u** is pronounced like *oo* as in "too"; except after *j, q, x* and *y*, where it is pronounced like *u* as in French "une".

**ua** is pronounced like *wa* as in "watch".

**uai** is pronounced like "why".

**uan** is pronounced like *wan* as in "wander"; except after *j, q, x* and *y*, where it is pronounced like *u* as in French "une", followed by *wen* as in "went".

**uang** is pronounced like *w* as in "wet", followed by *ong* as in "song".

**ue** is pronounced like üe (see below).

**ui** is pronounced like "way".

**un** is pronounced like *oo* as in "moon", followed by *un* as in "under"; except after *j, q, x* and *y*, where it is pronounced like French "une".

**uo** is pronounced like *w* as in "wet"; followed by a sound pronounced somewhat like *o* as in "hot", but with the mouth not as wide open.

**ü** is pronounced like *u* as in French "une".

**üe** is pronounced like *u* as in French "une", followed by *we* as in "went".
**Introduction of Chinese Pinyin Tones**

Tones are an important part of Chinese, which are the variation of pitch within a syllable and are used to distinguish words with same Pinyin. There are basically four tones and one neutral tone in Mandarin Chinese. The following chart illustrates the four basic tones.

**Basic Four Tone Marks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tones</th>
<th>Tone Marks</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st tone</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>high level</td>
<td>dā (drop down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd tone</td>
<td></td>
<td>high rising</td>
<td>dá (answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd tone</td>
<td>^</td>
<td>low dipping</td>
<td>dǎ (hit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th tone</td>
<td></td>
<td>high falling</td>
<td>dà (big)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The neutral tone, occurs on stressless syllables and has a pitch entirely determined by the tones of adjacent syllables. However, a neutral will never act as the starting tone. Neutral tones are usually unmarked. For example, the red parts of the following table are neutral tones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>māma</th>
<th>yéye</th>
<th>nǎinai</th>
<th>bāba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gēge</td>
<td>wāwa</td>
<td>jiējie</td>
<td>méimei</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhuōzi</td>
<td>fāngzi</td>
<td>běnzi</td>
<td>jīngzi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jìnzi</td>
<td>yínzi</td>
<td>zǎoshang</td>
<td>dìshang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dīngzi</td>
<td>miánhua</td>
<td>yīngzi</td>
<td>yànzi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tone Mark Placement**

The tone mark is placed over the vowel if there is only one vowel letter.

bù | nà | tè

If there are two vowels, the tone mark is placed on the first, unless the this first vowel is i or u.

kǎi | hēi | qióu | tūi

If there are three vowels in a syllable, the tone mark is placed on the middle one.

qiòng | zhｕāng | chuán

When the tone mark is place on i, the small dot is removed.

yí | lín | huī