

BEGINNING CHINESE

Lin Hong (洪琳)

Central Oregon Community College

2018



Beginning Chinese Textbook by [Lin Hong](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#).

COMMUNICATIVE OBJECTIVES

Once I have mastered this unit, I will be able to:

- ❑ in my own and in Chinese culture, identify social practices such as greetings, introductions, leave-taking, and thanking people.
- ❑ greet and take leave from someone using polite rehearsed behaviors.
- ❑ introduce myself to someone, both formally and informally, and introduce someone else to a third party.
- ❑ ask and reply to questions about how people are.

Module I: Saying Hello

模块一：你好

Scenario 1.1: Say hello in general.

A: 你好。	你	nǐ	you
	好	hǎo	good, well
B: 你好。	你好	nǐhǎo	hello

Note:

你好 literally means “(I hope that) you are well.” It can be used with people you know or do not know at any time of the day. To respond, you can simply say the same thing.

Scenario 1.2: A student named Li Ming meets Teacher Wang.

LM: 王老师，您好。	王	Wáng	Chinese surname
	老师	lǎoshī	teacher
W: 李明，你好。	您	nín	you (polite)
	李	Lǐ	Chinese surname

	明	Míng	Chinese given name
--	---	------	--------------------

Note:

TITLES It is polite to address people by using their surname and title. This pattern is:

Surname + Title

王 老师
(lit. "Wang Teacher")

This is the opposite order from English.

您 is the polite form for 你, and would be used by students to address their teachers, or by younger people to address older people, or by adults to address others in a formal environment.

Scenario 1.3: Li Ming meets his friend Zhang Wenshan's parents.

LM: 张叔叔好。	张	Zhāng	Chinese surname
F: 小明，你好。	叔叔	shūshu	uncle
LM: 张阿姨好。	小	xiǎo	little, junior
M: 小明，你好。	阿姨	āyí	aunt

Note:

TITLES It is polite to address people of your parents' age by using 叔叔 (lit. uncle) and 阿姨 (lit. aunt). If you know their surname, add their surname to the front. The pattern is:

Surname + 叔叔/阿姨

张 叔叔
(lit. "Uncle Zhang")

小 and 老 (lǎo) followed by monosyllabic surname or monosyllabic given name are commonly used to address people or to refer to them. The pattern is:

小/老+Surname/Given Name

like 小明 (lit. Little Ming), 老张 (lit. Old Zhang), 小李 (lit. Little Li). This pattern is only used in informal conversation. Non-native speakers should not use these terms until invited to do so.

Scenario 1.4: Neighbors meet around eating time. (informal)

A: Chīle ma? (吃了吗?)

A: (Have) you eaten yet?

B: Chīle, nǐ ne? (吃了, 你呢?)

B: Yes, I ate. How about you?

Scenario 1.5: Coworkers meet outside the office. (informal)

A: Chūqù a? (出去啊?)

A: (Are you) Going out?

B: Èn, chūqù yīxià. (嗯, 出去一下。)

B: Yes. (I am) going out for a short while.

Note:

INFORMAL GREETINGS In China, when people are familiar with each other, one will often ask the other a simple question in greeting. For example, if you pass by a neighbor in the hallway and it is around dinnertime, you might ask:

“Chī le ma? (吃了吗?)”
(lit. “Have you eaten yet?”)

Do not consider this as a dinner invitation. It is just a greeting. Even if you in fact have not yet eaten, it does not matter. The usual response to the question is:

“Chī le, nǐ ne? (吃了。你呢?)”
(lit. “Yes, I have eaten. How about you?”)

Or, if two coworkers meet outside the office, one might ask:

“Chūqù a? (出去啊?)”
(lit. “Are you going out?”)

It is a greeting rather than an actual question. The response is usually very simple.

吗 a final particle, is used to transform statements into questions. One of the most common ways of forming a question in Chinese is by adding **吗** to the end of a statement.

了 in this phrase indicates a changed situation (i.e., I have eaten now, but I did not earlier).

呢 a final particle, is used to abbreviate questions like “How about you?” in English.

一下 literally “a bit,” is often added after certain verbs to indicate that an action lasts for only a short period of time.

Module II: Introductions

模块二：介绍

Scenario 2.1: Zhang Wenshan introduces himself to the new classmates.

ZhW: 我姓张, 我叫张文山。你们可以叫我文山。	我	wǒ	I, me
	姓	xìng	be surnamed
	叫	jiào	be called
	你们	nǐmen	you (plural)
	可以	kěyǐ	can, may
	文山	Wénshān	given name

Note:

张文山 is a typical Chinese name. 张 is a common Chinese surname. 文山 is the given name, which always comes after the surname. In

China, people introduce their surname first to show respect to their ancestors.

姓 is used to give the surname, and 叫 can be used to give the full name or the given name.

Scenario 2.2: Zhang Guoxin introduces his family at a friend's party.

ZhG: 这是我的爱人。那是我的孩子。	这	zhè	this
	是	shì	be
	我的	wǒ de	my, mine
	爱人	àirén	spouse
	那	nà	that
	孩子	háizi	child, children

Note:

的 a particle, is used to indicate possession, as in 你的 (your, yours), 李明的 (Li Ming's).

爱人 refers to husband or wife, and is commonly used in mainland China. In Taiwan and Hong Kong, people usually use tàitai (太太, wife) and xiānshēng (先生, husband).

Scenario 2.3: Zhang Guoxin introduces his business partners at a reception.

ZhG: 这位是白先生。那位是李女士。	位	wèi	[M] for people
	白	Bái	Chinese surname
	先生	xiānshēng	Mr.
	女士	Nǚshì	Ms.

Note:

位 is a polite measure word for people. Unlike English, where most nouns are counted or specified directly (one room, this book), in

Chinese a so-called measure word must be used before a noun if it is counted or specified. The pattern is:

This/That + Measure + Noun

这 位 先生

(lit. this gentleman)

Sometimes, the context makes the nouns unnecessary.

TITLE Besides husband, 先生 also refers to gentleman and Mr.; 女士 is a formal, polite title for a married or unmarried woman. 先生 and 女士 can both be used alone or after the surname. 小姐 (Xiǎojiě, Miss) is often used to refer to a young lady in a formal conversation.

Module III: Greetings

模块三：寒暄

Scenario 3.1: Li Ming chats with Zhang Wenshan before the class starts.

LM: 你怎么样?	怎么样	zěnmeyàng	how
ZhW: 我很好。	很	hěn	very
or 还可以。	还	hái	still
or 我病了。	病了	bìng le	sick (particle)

Note:

你怎么样 lit. “How are you?”, is often used among people of approximately equal status, such as classmates or colleagues. To a superior, you should address the person by the title and replace 你 with 您.

很 is a very important adverb in Chinese. Unlike “very” in English, 很 usually only plays a grammar role as a place holder in front of the adjectives, instead of contributing to the meanings, unless 很 is

stressed. Therefore, the best translation of a sentence like 我很好 would be “I am fine.” rather than “I am very fine.”

还可以 lit. “still okay”, could be translated as “it is still all right”, “not too bad”, or “so so.” This informal expression would be used with people whom you know well.

了 in this sentence indicates a changed situation (i.e., I am sick now, but I was okay before).

Scenario 3.2: Teacher Wang greets Zhang Wenshan, who does not look fine.

W: 你还好吗?	吗	ma	(particle)
ZhW: 我很累。	累	lèi	tired
or 我很冷。	冷	lěng	cold
or 我很饿。	饿	è	hungry

Note:

吗 a final particle, is used to transform statements into questions. One of the most common ways of forming a question in Chinese is by adding 吗 to the end of a statement. The pattern is:

Statement + 吗

你还好 吗?

(lit. “Are you still doing okay?”)

很 an adverb. In Chinese, an adjective can be used as a predicate without being preceded by the verb 是 (shì, to be). The pattern is:

Subject + Adverbial Modifier + Adj.

我 很 累。

(lit. “I am tired.”)

In this pattern, 很 is not as strong as its English counterpart “very.” If you say only 我累, without the 很, this may imply comparison or

contrast, e.g., “I am tired (but he is not).” Note *我是累. is an incorrect expression.

Module IV: Taking leave

模块四：结束对话

Scenario 4.1: Say goodbye in general.

A: 再见。	再见	zàijiàn	goodbye
B: 再见。			e

Scenario 4.2: Li Ming says goodbye to Zhang Wenshan after the class ends.

LM: 明天见。	明天	míngtiān	tomorrow
ZhW: 明天见。	见	jiàn	see

Scenario 4.3: An Dawei says goodbye to Zhang Wenshan's mom after visiting.

AD: Wǒ yǒushì, děi zǒule. (我有事，得走了。)	I have something to do. I have to go.
M: Cháng lái wán. (常来玩。)	Come often to visit us.

Note:

TAKE LEAVE Wǒ yǒushì, děi zǒule. (我有事，得走了. Lit. “I have something to do. I have to go.”) is a common excuse for departing. Therefore, it is better not to ask what it is that the person must do when you hear someone say that. Chinese hosts often say “visit again” while saying goodbye.

Unit Review

单元复习

Can-do Checklist:

After studying this unit, I can:

- recognize and read aloud these words:

你 好 你好 王 老师 您 李 明 张 叔叔 小 阿姨 我
姓 叫 你们 可以 文山 这 是 我的 爱人 那 孩子 位 白 先生
女士 怎么样 很 还 病 了 吗 累 冷 饿 再见 明天 见

- write these characters from memory:

小 文 山 子 白 女 生 见 老 天
你 好 明 的 位 这 还 姓 很 病

- tell someone my name.
- recognize other peoples' name and title when they are introduced.
- greet and take leave in a polite way.
- recognize whether a correspondence is formal or informal.
- give compliments and respond to compliments.
- say if I feel well, so-so, or sick.
- say that I am hungry, cold or tired, and ask others.
- recognize a character's name in a folk tale.
- respond with the appropriate greeting to a text message.