

book is written by those who understand the difficulties of the Mandarin language, as well as the pitfalls that many fall into when learning the language. This is exactly what this book aims to ameliorate.

Although we want you all to learn and be as fluent in Mandarin as you can possibly be, it will not happen overnight. Learning a new language will take lots of time, repetition and dedication. What you put in, is what you will get out. This book intends to act as a resource that creates a strong foundation for learning Mandarin. You may find that as you progress, you start to forget the basics. This is one of the reasons that *Learn Mandarin Chinese for Beginners* was created — to ensure that your basic Mandarin skills are always top-notch.

A memory that reinforced the creation of this book was my own journey in learning Mandarin. The excitement of booking your next HSK test was often coupled with a large number of sleepless nights before the test. The amount of time I had used to focus on the repetition, speech, and characters could probably have earned me a good sum of money.

However, the feeling of passing and receiving your HSK certificate, allowing you to move on to the next level, is such a surreal feeling. You see, Mandarin is more than just memorizing a bunch of characters; it integrates history with current teachings, ensuring that the cultural aspect of the Mandarin language is not neglected.

You have taken the first step in learning Mandarin. Remember the level of excitement that you are currently feeling. Ensure that you stay motivated and dedicated to your own learning, as it is with self-discipline that you will be conversing in Mandarin with all of your friends. Whether you are learning Mandarin as a party trick, because you find Chinese culture interesting, or you are planning to immigrate to an Asian country that speaks Mandarin, the journey starts now.

Mandarin (mainland China's official language), and Jin (also referred to as Jin-yu), a language spoken by occupants of inner Mongolia and the central-north region of China.

When referring to *Language Atlas of China*, there is a division whereby eight different dialects are spoken. How these eight divisions differ is via the manner that the Middle Chinese entering tone is utilized. In order to provide some geographical context, we have included the eight divisions below:

- Northeastern Mandarin is spoken by approximately 98 million individuals. Typically, this form of Mandarin is spoken in all places of Manchuria except in the Liaodong Peninsula. Since there is a very strong similarity with standard Chinese, there are very few tonal differences that establish a differentiation.
- Beijing Mandarin is spoken by approximately 27 million individuals. Typically spoken in Beijing along with in Chengde and Northern Hebei, it has begun to branch further into areas such as northern Xinjiang. With the Beijing dialect forming the basis of standard Chinese, one would expect there to be more individuals who speak it. However, it is because many researchers group Beijing Mandarin and Northeastern Mandarin together based on similarity that the number of people who speak these two dialects respectively are combined.
- Jilu Mandarin is localized to the Hebei and Shandong provinces, with approximately 89 million individuals speaking this dialect. There are marked differences regarding the tones and vocabulary when compared to standard Chinese, leading to zero understanding when conversing with the latter.
- Jiao Liao Mandarin shows a very large degree of variance when compared to Beijing Mandarin. Typically, this variance has resulted in only 35 million individuals speaking the dialect. With very noticeable changes in tone, it is primarily spoken by the Shandong and Liaodong Peninsulas.
- Central Plains Mandarin, spoken by approximately 186 million individuals, is typically found in the central parts of Shaanxi, eastern Gansu, and southern Xinjiang. There is marked intelligibility when compared to Beijing Mandarin, primarily due to the phonological differences.
- Lanyin Mandarin is spoken by 17 million individuals across the central and western Gansu province, as well as in the Ningxia autonomous region.

some countries like Taiwan continue to refer to Mandarin as guó yǔ.

Mandarin uses Chinese characters, known as Hànzì (字), as its writing system, however, these characters have their own history. Chinese characters appeared over 2,000 years ago, represented as images of real objects. However, as time progressed, the characters became more stylized and started representing ideas as well as objects. With that being said, many characters can comprise two or more ideas, all illustrated differently based on the direction and amount of brush strokes present.

Each Chinese character represents a specific syllable of the Chinese language. However, it needs to be acknowledged that there are many Chinese characters that cannot be used independently as they wouldn't make sense on their own. It is usually the Chinese writing system that deters individuals from wanting to learn Mandarin. However, although it definitely has a certain complexity about it, there are many modern-day tips that can be used to master this writing system.

According to the *Kangxi Dictionary* (康熙字典), there are 47,035 Chinese characters. With there being quite a few historical Chinese character formations that were possibly not registered in the *Kangxi Dictionary*, the actual number to this day remains a mystery. However, do not let this number scare you, as there are really only 3,500 basic Chinese characters that are used for everyday communication. As everything does, Chinese characters have evolved over thousands of years. Their scripts and styles have been changed to form what we now know as freehand cursive, or Xing Shu (行书).

Oracle bone inscriptions were the first depictions of Chinese characters, and they were typically seen as inscriptions on the carapaces of mammals and tortoises during the Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 BCE). These inscriptions were typically used for divination, leading it to being called “bu ci” (卜辞).

With there being approximately 4,000 different inscriptions recorded in history, only a thousand of them have successfully been deciphered. As the Shang Dynasty led into the Zhou Dynasty (1046 - 256 BCE), bronze inscriptions were noticed on ritual wine vessels and other bronze objects. There were a further 4,000 different bronze inscriptions present, with more than half of them being successfully understood today.

As the Zhou Dynasty led into the Qin Dynasty (221 - 207 BCE), small seal characters gained popularity. It is here that various scripts began to be adopted by different parts of the Chinese empire. It is also here where, along with the

Chapter 3: How to Approach Learning Mandarin – Studying Tips and Tricks

At this point, you have already heard that learning Mandarin can be rather difficult. However, it is not knowing where to start learning that typically stops people from pursuing learning the language. One really needs to be sure that they are learning Mandarin for the right reasons, as passion fuels action; where there is no passion, there will be no action. Learning Mandarin is not for everyone, especially as it takes countless more hours to learn in comparison to other languages.

What is recommended is taking a free online class with either “Tutor Mandarin” or “eChinese Learning” to see if pursuing learning the language is right for you. Not only will you get a first-hand look at what learning looks like, but you will get a feel as to how much time you will need to dedicate in order to truly learn the language.

Whether it be a personal goal or a rather impulsive want, it is advised to do some research on Mandarin learning materials that are available online. When it comes to learning the language, it is going to take a lot more than attending a few classes. Keats School and StudyCLI are two institutions that offer seminars, immersion programs and study abroad opportunities, which is perfect for anyone who wants to take their learning to the next level.

A resource that many recommend is called Fluenz. It allows you to consolidate the knowledge you have learned in online classes with the information that you are going to find in these two workbooks. The book that you are currently reading, as well as its associated counterpart, work perfectly with Fluenz, especially seeing as the amount of practice provided will have you reading and writing Mandarin in no time.

Make sure that you have a few notepads handy that you have dedicated solely to practicing your Chinese characters and pinyin. Preferably, try to pick a notebook that has large line spaces and margins as this will make jotting down characters that much easier while also providing more than enough space to practice the writing of the characters.

them off of how much time you are able to commit per week to learning Mandarin. As you move from your long-term goals to your short-term ones, set monthly goals that could vary from having memorized a hundred Chinese characters to even reading an easy Chinese book.

Also, make sure that these goals envelop the SMART criteria. This means the following:

- Specific (S): One wants to ensure that the goal that you have in mind is specific. Ask questions like, “What needs to be accomplished?”, and, “What steps need to be taken to achieve this?” As you start to answer these questions, you are providing prompts that will ultimately establish a highly specific goal that is context-specific.
- Measurable (M): Adding numbers to your goal quantifies it, allowing it to be even more impactful. How many Chinese characters do you want to have memorized in two months? 30? 100? Being able to establish these small yet concise goals provides a newfound self-confidence that establishes a positive growth pattern as you continue to learn Mandarin.
- Attainable (A): When a goal is reached, it should empower you to take the next step, which is why you need to have a serious reality check. Is your goal realistic? One cannot expect to have a hundred Chinese characters memorized in one month when only one hour per week is spent actively studying.
- Relevant (R): The best goals have a benefit attached when achieving them. You want to really delve deep and establish why this goal is important to you. Will learning Mandarin give you improved education prospects? Will it allow you to create a better life for you or your family? As soon as you attach a benefit to your goal, you make it more real, with there being a tangible result that you can gain once completing it.
- Time-bound (T): If you don’t have a deadline imposed on your goals, you are going to keep procrastinating and, in the end, not reaching them. This aspect of SMART provides deadlines for your goals. Your goals can also have mini checkpoints that are time-bound. For example, if you want to learn a hundred new Chinese characters per month, this means that you need to learn twenty-five new Chinese characters per week.

Reviewing your goals and ensuring that they remain SMART is the key to not only achieving your goals, but learning Mandarin at a pace that fits your routine and schedule. It is important that you are not afraid to alter your goals. It is better

Chapter 5: Tones

One thing that is imperative to your success in learning Mandarin is understanding the tonal aspects of the language. With many linguists believing that tones did not exist during the use of Old Chinese, they do play a vital component in differentiating the meaning of words. Tones exist when writing pinyin and need to be adhered to as missing a tone could change the entire context of a sentence. There are many ways to learn how to pronounce tones, but it is important that tones are learned and pronounced correctly in order to ensure the topic of a conversation is maintained.

There are four main tones in the Mandarin language. These are as follows:

- First tone: This tone is referred to as “ping” (一) and is typically pronounced at a level but higher pitch. Its accentuation on the letter in pinyin is ā.
- Second tone: When pronouncing this tone, start off at a lower pitch, rising to end at a slightly higher pitch. Referred to as “shang” (二), the accentuation on the letter in pinyin is á.
- Third tone: Probably one of the most difficult tones to master, this one will have you start at a neutral tone, dipping to a lower pitch and then rising back to where you initially started. It is seen as the “falling and rising” tone, referred to as “qu” (三). In pinyin, its accentuation is ǎ.
- Fourth tone: Starting from a pitch that is slightly higher than neutral, the spoken syllable moves strongly and quickly downward. Called “ru” (四), it is often compared to the forcefulness of reprimanding another person. Its pinyin accentuation is à.

To provide some context regarding how important tones are, below is a table where the pinyin uses the same lettering but has different tones:

Pinyin	Chinese character	Meaning
mā	/	Mother
má		Hemp
mǎ	/	Horse



In Mandarin, there is a concept known as the “composite stroke”. This term refers to two different movements of brush strokes that are joined together without lifting the brush or pen. The stroke we will be focusing on is the heng gou () stroke. To see this stroke clearly, we will refer to the Chinese character for “write”, called “xiě” (). The heng gou stroke, which is drawn below in blue, is composed of a horizontal héng stroke followed by the hook, referred to as gōu. To calligraphically explain this entire character, we will break it down into segments. Reading the character from the top, one can see a vertical stroke first drawn, followed by the heng gou. Below, one can see the pictograph of a bird, representing that of a magpie. This character is visually represented as follows:

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As héng can be adapted to form shù, heng gou can be adapted to form shu gou (). The downward shù stroke is terminated by a flick in order to give the hook-like appearance of gou. A Chinese character that consists of a shu gou, is “shǒu” (), which stands for “hand”. Describing the character below, it represents the lines that cross over the palm of a hand. The order in which these strokes are drawn are from top to bottom, with the shu gou stroke being drawn last. Keep in mind that this character is also the radical for wǒ that was discussed previously.

The shu gou can be visually represented in blue as follows:



The gou hook can be added to a curved stroke, referred to as “wan”. This will then result in the stroke you see below, called “wan gou” (). Calligraphically, the wan gou starts off at the top left, creating a curve that is first round then becomes vertical. It then ends in a hook as it states in his name. The wan gou forms an integral part of “gǒu” (note the different accent on the “u”), which means “dog” (). This character can be visually represented as follows:

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When we look at the “wǒ” () character (the character for “I”), it does not only consist of a “tí” () stroke. On its other side, there is a stroke known as “xie gou” (). How this segment of the character is calligraphically represented is by starting at the top, angling the brush or pen in a way that is curved toward the right-hand side. At the end, a hook is present. This is created by the brush or pen being lifted from the paper quickly as the brush or pen moves to the right. This character, with its xie gou segment in blue, can be visually represented as follows:

mindset so that mistakes are actually a fun part of the process, you will begin to see that the errors you are making are not as bad as they seem. It does not matter whether you are struggling with grammar, vocabulary, or character drawing — mistakes will happen. The quicker that you are able to deal with them, the better.

2. Not understanding the manner by which you learn.

How we decide to learn is just as important as the content that we are learning. One needs to understand what their learning style is, because the means by which we retain and interact with information is completely different. It is highly recommended that before you start studying Mandarin, you do a learning style test (there are many free ones online). Some of the questions they will ask may include, “Do you prefer reading about your interests over and above listening to them?”, or, “Do you prefer a more hands-on approach when learning new concepts?” It is when you can understand yourself that you will be able to establish a tailored discipline toward learning and retaining what you learn during your journey.

3. Not starting off with the sounds.

One of the first concepts that one should focus on when learning a new language is sounds. With so many individuals not starting this way, they are already creating an unstable foundation, as well as more difficulty in learning Mandarin. You may feel the need to jump straight to reading and writing Mandarin, but how will you know if your pronunciation is correct without having studied the sounds? Verbal exercises are pivotal when learning Mandarin, especially because of the little nuances that are associated with the different tones in the language. By not starting with this first, you are already putting yourself at a disadvantage.

4. Your main focus is on the incorrect vocabulary.

One needs to be cognizant of the words that they are feeding their brain,

personalities, but also their current life circumstances. It is in this way that you should use your learning style to your advantage, making it the core of how you approach your Mandarin studies. Imitating another person's learning style will only provide you with ineffective study sessions, setting you even further back. However, do not completely cut yourself off from the study methods of others, as you could always learn something new.

Know yourself and what works for you, as well as what does not. Remember, you are not other people, and your life is not theirs to live. After all, there are those who would never envision learning another language, so you are already one step ahead!

3. Converse with yourself in your target language.

Self-confidence is imperative when learning a new language. Many will tell you that talking to yourself could be seen as rather weird, but in this case, it is a way to become even more comfortable with speaking Mandarin. It does not matter if you are washing your car, making dinner, or feeding the dogs — challenge yourself to speak to yourself within the context of the action that you are doing.

This is an even better way of overcoming a possible fear of speaking in public, especially if you have anxiety revolving around being embarrassed if you were to make a mistake. What is suggested to do in Mandarin is explore the pros and cons, as well as what your dreams, aspirations, fears, and concerns are. You will find that you are your own best listener. The monologues that you will end up having with yourself are fantastic ways to train, especially when one of your end goals is to be able to talk to people. The more often you talk to yourself, the more you will start to understand your own language imperfections, being able to rectify them as quickly as possible.

4. Learn from your mistakes.

In order for you to overcome any form of fear related to speaking Mandarin, you will need to understand the mistakes that you have made, as well as systematically work through each one.

In Mandarin, there are typically two cases in which mistakes will be made.

Chapter 9: Learning Some Words

By now, you have a strong foundation regarding how tones work, how to draw pinyin, as well as how to approach your Mandarin studies. Now it is time to apply some elbow grease as you start to learn some categories of Mandarin words.

Below, you will find some of the most commonly used terms that are most likely to come up in conversation. This is not an exhaustive list. However, if you find a word that is not in a category that it should be, write it in and start to create your own collection of Mandarin words.

Pronouns and Genders

Pronouns		
I, Me		Wǒ
You		Nǐ
You (formal)		Nín
Him, he		Tā
Her, she		Tā
It		Tā
Him, Her (godly/divine beings)		Tā
It (animals)		Tā
Plural pronoun		
Us		Wǒmen
Them		Tāmen
You guys		Nǐmen

Hello		Nǐhǎo
Hello (formal)		Nínhǎo
How are you?		Nǐhǎo ma
I am good		Wǒ hěnhǎo
Thank you		Xièxiè
And you?		Nǐne?
How have you been?		Nǐ zuìjìn hǎo ma
Long time no see/it has been a while		Hǎojiǔ bùjiàn (the bù is read as b ú
Good morning		Zǎo ān
Good afternoon		Wǔ ān
Good evening/good night		Wǎn'ān
Please to meet you		Xìng huì/ Gāoxìng rèn chí nǐ
Goodbye/see you again		Zàijiàn
Let us meet soon		Wǒmen zài yuē
I'm off/I'm leaving		Wǒ zǒule

Family Members

Mom		Māmā
Mother		Mǔqīn
Dad		Bàba

Mouse		Lǎoshǔ
Octopus		Zhāngyú
Ostrich		Tuóniǎo
Owl		Māotóuyīng
Panda		Xióngmāo
Peacock		Kǒngquè
Penguin		Qì'é
Pig		Zhū
Pigeon		Gēzi
Rabbit		Tùzǐ
Salmon		Sānyú
Shark		Shāyú
Sheep		Yáng
Snail		Wōniú
Spider		Zhīzhū
Tiger		Lǎohǔ
Whale		Jīngyú
Wolf		Láng
Zebra		Bānmǎ

Body Parts

Head		Tóu

Face		Liǎn
Eyebrow		Méi
Eyes		Yǎnjīng
Nose		Bízi
Ears		Ěrduǒ
Mouth		Kǒu
Teeth		Yáchǐ
Tongue		Shé
Nostrils		Bíkǒng
Hair		Tóufǎ
Beard		Hóuzi
Neck		Jǐngbù
Throat		Hóu
Shoulders		Jiānbǎng
Arms		Shǒubì
Elbow		Shǒuzhǒu
Wrist		Shǒuwàn
Hand		Shǒu
Fingers		Shǒuzhǐ
Nails		Zhǐjiǎ
Palm		Shǒuzhǎng
Chest		Xiōngbù
Abdomen		Fùbù

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Bedroom		Wòshì
Bed		Chuáng
Pillow		Zhěntou
Curtain		Chuānglián
Beddings		Chuángshàng yòngpǐn g
Wardrobe		Yīguì
Clothes		Yīfú
Shirt		Chènshān
Pants		Kùzi
Shoes		Xiézi
Makeup		Huàzhuāngpǐn
Kitchen		Chúfáng
Cupboard		Chúguì
Chair		Yǐzi
Table		Zhuōzi
Fridge		Bīngxiāng
Stove		Lúzi
Sink		Shuǐcáo
Bathroom		Yùshì
Shower		Línyù
Bathtub		Yùgāng
Tap		Shuǐlóngtóu
Mirror		Jìngzi

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