

## Complete Lesson Transcript – Lesson 002

Adam: Hello, my name is Adam.

Kirin: And I'm Kirin.

Adam: And we're glad that you tuned in to ChineseLearnOnline.com where we hope to improve your Chinese one lesson at a time. This is lesson two of our series. In our show last time we introduced the four tones to you in Chinese. If you are not familiar with them, we encourage you to listen to lesson one again to get a handle on them. Just as a review though Kirin, why don't you give them to us again, using a different example. Now there were four tones. The first one was a high tone...

Kirin: Dā , dā

Adam: The second one was the rising tone.

Kirin: Dá , dá

Adam: We then had the falling rising tone.

Kirin: Dǎ , dǎ

Adam: And lastly we had the falling tone.

Kirin: Dà , dà

Adam: Great, now that we've mastered our tones, let's move on to some useful vocabulary.

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Now I'm sure the first thing that anybody wants to know when learning a new language is how to say 'hello.' So how do you say 'hello' in Chinese, Kirin?

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo .

Adam: Great, now just a note on how we do things around here. You'll notice a lot of pauses during my conversation with Kirin – especially after she pronounces new words or when I ask her questions. This is done on purpose to get you, our listeners, involved. I highly encourage you to try and pick out the tones she is using and try to repeat them after her. As well, when I ask Kirin a question there will usually be a pause in there so you the listener can try and come up with the answer first before she does. As we said in our previous lesson if you can sound out the words out aloud, please do so and if not, then please try and do so in your head. So again to say 'hello' in Chinese, there are two words here and two tones – listen and try to distinguish what tones they are. So again, Kirin – 'hello.'

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo .

Adam: Ok, so the first word was a falling rising tone and the second word was also a falling rising tone.

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo .

Adam: Let's look at the literal meaning. The **nǐ** means 'you.' And the **hǎo** means 'good.' So when you say **nǐ hǎo** in Chinese, you're actually wishing someone "you good." Isn't that interesting? So there are two important words we've learned today - the word for 'you' - **nǐ** and the word for 'good' **hǎo** and if you put them together you get **nǐ hǎo** which means 'hello!' You'll find that a lot in Chinese. When common words are put together they can represent very different meanings and that's what we hope to teach you during our podcast lessons. As well, we find that breaking down the meanings of individual words helps in learning so you understand how phrases are constructed in Chinese.

Now, **hǎo** is a very useful word in Chinese because it is also used in the context of 'ok.' So many times in conversation you'll hear people reply with **hǎo** meaning 'ok.'

Shall we continue, Kirin?

Kirin: Hǎo .

Adam: Great. In fact you'll hear me use **hǎo** every now and then to mean 'ok.' As we teach new vocabulary, we'll try and use them in context to get you in the habit of learning its usage. In future lessons if you hear us use a word you're not familiar with, you can check on our website in the lessons section under [Course outline](#) where you can hunt down the word in the current lesson and find which lesson it was first introduced in. Our goal is to make sure that every Chinese word we use here is taught and understood so this way we hope you won't be left behind. Ok?

Kirin: Hǎo .

Adam: Hǎo . Now when someone says **Nǐ hǎo** to you, what is the standard response?

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo .

Adam: So basically you just repeat it back to them as you would if they were saying 'hello' to you. So let's try that.

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo .

Adam: **Nǐ hǎo** . Just like that – excellent. Let's move on to "How are you?" How would you ask that?

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo ma?

Adam: Now you'll notice that that's quite similar to saying 'hello' except we've added a **ma** at the end.

Kirin: Nǐ hǎo ma?

Adam: Now **ma** actually doesn't have a tone – it's what we call a neutral tone. It's what we use to turn a statement into a question. So if the literal translation of **Nǐ hǎo** means

“you good,” **Nǐ hǎo ma** is a question so it’s asking “Are you good?” And that’s what is used to ask “How are you?”.

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo ma?**

Adam: Now a culture note here - whereas in English we often ask someone “How are you?” or “How are you doing?” quite often and quite casually, in Chinese **Nǐ hǎo ma?** is only used when you really want to know how someone is doing. Usually it’s when you meet someone you haven’t seen in a long time. Now getting back to my usage of **hǎo** to mean ‘ok,’ I could also use **hǎo ma?** to mean ‘ok?’ as in asking for your approval or agreement. So Kirin if I ask you **hǎo ma?** what would you say?

Kirin: **Hǎo .**

Adam: Good, she agrees. Now let’s continue. What is the standard response to **Nǐ hǎo ma?**

Kirin: **Wǒ hěn hǎo .**

Adam: **Hǎo** , so we have a couple of new words here that we can look at. The first one is **wǒ** . That’s also a falling rising tone. **Wǒ** means ‘I’ or ‘me.’

The next one is **hěn** which is also a falling rising tone. **Hěn** means ‘very,’ although it has a less intense meaning than the ‘very’ in English so you tend to use it a lot more often in Chinese than you would use ‘very’ in English. The last word which we’ve seen before is **hǎo** which means ‘good.’

So putting those three words together **wǒ hěn hǎo** , we get... “I’m very good.”

Kirin: **Wǒ hěn hǎo .**

Adam: So actually if you can get past the difference in tones between Chinese and English, the actual syntax and grammar is a lot simpler in Chinese than it is in English. Once you figure out this basic syntax it’s a lot easier to translate phrases to other contexts. For example we now know the word for ‘you’ which is...

Kirin: **Nǐ .**

Adam: We also know ‘I’:

Kirin: **Wǒ .**

Adam: How about the word for ‘he’ or ‘she’?

Kirin: **Tā .**

Adam: Again...

Kirin: **Tā .**

Adam: Now our listeners should recognize that as a high tone. The word for ‘he’ and ‘she’ is the same in Chinese so you have to distinguish between male and female from the context. If I was pointing at a man when I said **tā** , you’d know I mean ‘he’ while if I was pointing at a woman you’d know that I meant ‘she.’ So knowing what we’ve learned so far I’ll ask our listeners to play along. How would you ask “How is he?”

Kirin: **Tā hǎo ma?**

Adam: Great, and how would you say “He is great” or “He is very good”?

Kirin: **Tā hěn hǎo** .

Adam: **Hǎo** . So let’s move along to the word for ‘thanks.’ How do you say ‘thanks’?

Kirin: **Xièxie** .

Adam: So that’s the same word said twice, both falling tones meaning ‘thanks.’

Kirin: **Xièxie** .

Adam: Now depending on where you are you may hear the second word pronounced with a neutral tone giving us **xièxie** , rather than **xièxiè** . Additionally, you can also say a more polite **xièxie nǐ** to mean “thank you” rather than just **xièxie** meaning ‘thanks’. Hope you got that!

Let’s end our show today by teaching how to say ‘goodbye.’ How do we say ‘goodbye,’

Kirin?

Kirin: **Zàijiàn** .

Adam: Again?

Kirin: **Zàijiàn** .

Adam: Alright so I’ll ask our listeners if they can figure out the tones on those two words. They are both... falling tones. The literal meaning for the two words is **zài** meaning ‘again’ and **jiàn** meaning ‘meet,’ so “again meet,” kind of like “See you again.”

Kirin: **Zàijiàn** .

Adam: Let’s wrap up with a review of all the vocabulary we learned today. So we’ll start with ‘hello.’

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo** .

Adam: How are you?

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo ma?**

Adam: I’m great.

Kirin: **Wǒ hěn hǎo** .

Adam: Thank you.

Kirin: **Xièxie** .

Adam: Goodbye.

Kirin: **Zàijiàn** .

Adam: Great, so that wraps up today’s lesson. I hope you learned something from it. We’ll be back again next time with another show. See you then.

Kirin: **Zàijiàn** .