

Complete Lesson Transcript – Lesson 2 [Pinyin]

Hosts: Adam Menon / Kirin Yang

Adam: Hello, my name is Adam.

Kirin: And I'm Kirin.

Adam: And welcome to ChineseLearnOnline.com our progressive course teaching Mandarin Chinese. In our lesson 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. Now 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 tone was a high tone...

Kirin: Dā , dā .

Adam: The second tone was the rising tone.

Kirin: Dá , dá .

Adam: The third tone was the falling rising tone.

Kirin: Dǎ , dǎ .

Adam: And lastly we had the fourth tone which was a falling tone.

Kirin: Dà , dà .

Adam: Now this is the last time that I'll refer to the tones as high, rising, falling and rising, and falling. From here on I'll refer to the tones as tone, 1, 2, 3 and 4. So You'll have to remember which is which. There are only four ones, so hopefully I am not asking too much of you here. Now that we've mastered these tones, let's move on to some useful vocabulary.

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 listener, involved. So

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. Now another point to note is while in English words are made up of letters, in Chinese we deal with characters. A character is essentially a syllable which has its own tone. A word can be made up of one or more characters. So again to say “hello” in Chinese, there are two characters here each of which has its own tone. So listen and try to distinguish what tones they are. So again, Kirin – “hello.”

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo** .

Adam: Alright, so the first character was a third tone and the second character was also a third tone.

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo** .
nǐ

Adam: Now 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 characters we’ve learned today - the character for “you” - **nǐ** and the character 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 characters 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 since we plan to be quite thorough in our teaching, I highly recommend you take a look at the premium section of this lesson on our website since it actually shows you how the characters we teach you here are written in Chinese. We even show you how to write them on paper. If you were to learn what each character looks in Chinese before moving on, by the time we get to more advanced lessons, you’ll be able to read entire transcripts in Chinese. That is highly recommended if you are planning to develop fluency! Now let’s get back to the characters we just saw here. **Hǎo** is a very useful character 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. 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 [Course outline](#) section, where you can hunt down the word in the current lesson and find out which lesson it was first introduced

in. So our goal here is to make sure that every Chinese word we use here is taught and understood, so this way you won't be left behind. Ok?

Kirin: **Hǎo** .

Adam: 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". So let's try that.

Kirin: **Nǐ hǎo** .

Adam: **Nǐ hǎo** . Just like that – excellent. Let's move on to "How are you?" Now 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 the **ma** character 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 third tone. **wǒ** means “I” or “me.”

The next one is **hěn** which is also a third 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 character 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: So how about the word for “he” or “she”?

Kirin: **Tā** .

Adam: Again...

Kirin: **Tā** .

Adam: Now our listeners should recognize that as a first 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.”

Now getting back to the characters, there are actually two different characters for he and she – a male and female equivalent – so in written form you would know the difference whereas in spoken form, you would have to derive it from context. Again, take a look at the premium vocabulary link for this page on our website to see what these characters look like. So knowing what we've learned so far, I'll ask our listeners to play along. How would you ask “How is she?”

Kirin: Tā hǎo ma ?

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

Kirin: Tā hěn hǎo .

Adam: Hǎo . Now let’s move along to the word for “thanks.” How do you say “thanks”?

Kirin: Xièxie .

Adam: So this word is made up of two characters, and it’s actually the same character said twice, both fourth 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 all that!

Let’s end our lesson today by teaching how to say “goodbye.” How do you say “goodbye.”

Kirin: Zàijiàn .

Adam: Again?

Kirin: Zàijiàn .

Adam: Alright so I’ll ask our listeners if they can figure out the tones on those two characters. They are both...fourth 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’ve 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: Thanks.

Kirin: [Xièxie](#) .

Adam: Goodbye.

Kirin: [Zàijiàn](#) .

Adam: Great, so that wraps up today's lesson. I hope you learned something there. The premium vocabulary link for this lesson is available for all users to visit. It's actually free for the first four lessons of each level. If you like what you see, then consider a premium subscription that would give you access to these additional resources for all lessons. In any case, please join us again next time for lesson 3. See you then!

Kirin: [Zàijiàn](#) .