

Complete Lesson Transcript – Lesson 61 [Pinyin]

Hosts: Adam Menon / Kirin Yang

Adam: ChineseLearnOnline.com Lesson 61: The Four Tones revisited.

Hello, and welcome to Lesson 61 of the ChineseLearnOnline.com podcast series teaching Mandarin Chinese. I'm your host Adam.

Kirin: [Dàjiā hǎo](#) . [Wǒ shì Kirin](#) . [Huānyíng láidào dì liù shí yī kè](#) .

Adam: Today's lesson also marks the beginning of level two of our series, which means a slight bump in the level of difficulty used here. Over the next little while we will try and convert more of the lesson teaching into Chinese bit by bit. As always though, transcripts and translations of everything we say here is available in the Premium section of our website.

We're going to begin level 2 by expanding on what was taught in level one. Now if we look back to our first ever lesson, that was on the four tones. There's also a fifth tone which we've come across, which is a neutral tone. By now, you've hopefully mastered the differences between the tones and are comfortable enough to start discussing them in Chinese, so that's what we'll do from here on. So Kirin, how do we say "The five tones" in Chinese?

Kirin: [Wǔ zhǒng shēngdiào](#) .

Adam: So let's break that down. Five [zhǒng](#) . You may remember, [zhǒng](#) from lesson 25 as a measure word meaning "kind" or "type." So that gives us five kind [shēngdiào](#) which is our first new word of the day and literally means "sound tone."

Kirin: [Shēngdiào](#) .

Adam: We'll come back to this in a moment. Now the five tones we talked about earlier in English are referred to in the same order as first, second, third, fourth and fifth tones in Chinese. So the first tone in Chinese is:

Kirin: [Dìyī shēng](#) .

Adam: The second tone is

Kirin: [Dìèr shēng](#) .

Adam: The third tone is

Kirin: [Disān shēng](#) .

Adam: And the fourth tone is

Kirin: [Dìsì shēng](#) .

Adam: So, hopefully, you get the hang of that. And lastly we have the neutral tone which is:

Kirin: [Dìwǔ shēng](#) .

Adam: Now in our course, we'll refer to the neutral tone as the fifth tone. But in Chinese, they call it the neutral tone which is [qīngshēng](#) .

So when learning Chinese you, of course, will come across new words from time to time and may need to know what tones are used. Now first, I need to make a distinction between “word” and “characters.” In English, of course, words are broken down into letters of the alphabet. The Chinese language doesn't use letters, of course, it uses Chinese characters. So some words may consist of one or more Chinese characters, each of which uses one of the five tones that we just talked about. So first Kirin, why don't you tell us how you say “character” in Chinese.

Kirin: [Zì](#) .

Adam: Again

Kirin: [Zì](#) .

Adam: So if I wanted to know what tone a particular character used, how would I ask that?

Kirin: [Zhègè zì shì nǎ yī zhǒng shēngdiào ?](#)

Adam: Which literally means “this character is which kind tone?”

Kirin: [Zhègè zì shì nǎ yī zhǒng shēngdiào ?](#)

Adam: So I could start by asking:

Kirin: [Zì shì nǎ yī zhǒng shēngdiào ?](#)

Adam: And how would you answer that?

Kirin: [Zì shì dìsì zhǒng shēngdiào .](#)

Adam: So, hopefully, you see how that works. Let's go back to [shēngdiào](#) which we learned today. This word can be broken down into two characters [shēng](#) and [diào](#) . So let me ask you:

Kirin: Shēng, zhège zì shì nǎ yī zhǒng shēngdiào ?

Shēng shì dìyī zhǒng shēngdiào .

Adam: So again, literally, she answered: Shēng is first type of tone.

Kirin: Shēng shì dìyī zhǒng shēngdiào .

Adam: Alright, and let me ask:

Kirin: Diào, zhège zì shì nǎ yī zhǒng shēngdiào ?

Diào shì dìsì zhǒng shēngdiào .

Adam: Great, so I hope you can get the hang of this.

Now, of course, many times one or more characters are combined to form a word. To keep things clear, we'll separate them as we did with shēngdiào . So Kirin why don't you pick a word we've learned before and ask us what tones are used there.

Kirin: Hǎo, zuótiān, zuó shì nǎ yī shēng ?

Adam: Great, so a little shorter form of that question. And how would we answer that?

Kirin: Zuó shì dìèr shēng .

Adam: So you can see the shorter form is used to answer this as well. Let's try another one.

Kirin: Hànbǎo de hàn shì dìjǐ shēng ?

Adam: So yet another way to ask this same question. Hànbǎo de hàn means the hàn in hànbǎo .

Kirin: Hànbǎo de hàn shì dìjǐ shēng ?

Adam: Dìjǐ shēng ? You may remember that jǐ means "how many?" So the literal form of this question is the hàn in hànbǎo is "which tone?" as in "which position number?"

Kirin: Hànbǎo de hàn shì dìjǐ shēng ?

Adam: So how would you answer that?

Kirin: Hàn shì dìsì shēng .

Adam: You can see more of these examples in the podcast review for this lesson. For now though, let's review the vocabulary taught in today's lesson.

Kirin: Wǔ zhǒng shēngdiào .

Adam: The five tones.

Kirin: Dìyī shēng .

Adam: The first tone.

Kirin: Dìèr shēng .

Adam: The second tone.

Kirin: Disān shēng .

Adam: The third tone.

Kirin: Dìsì shēng .

Adam: The fourth tone.

Kirin: Dìwǔ shēng .

Adam: The fifth tone, or the neutral tone.

Kirin: Qīngshēng .

Adam: Neutral tone.

Kirin: Dìjǐ shēng ?

Adam: Which tone?

Kirin: Zì .

Adam: Character.

So that's the new vocabulary for you to study today. We'll be adding more to this in our next lesson; so please join us for that.

As this is the first lesson of level two, some of the premium features are available for free to try out. So take a look that on our website and then decide whether or premium subscription suits you, then join us again next time for lesson 62.

Kirin: Zàijiàn .