

## Tones of Chinese Pinyin

### Introduction of Chinese Pinyin Tones

Tones are an important part of Chinese, which are the variation of pitch within a syllable and are used to distinguish words with same Pinyin. There are basically four tones and one neutral tone in Mandarin Chinese. The following chart illustrates the four basic tones.

#### Basic Four Tone Marks

Tones	Tone Marks	Descriptions	Examples
1st tone	mā	陰平/阴平 high level	dā 搭(take)
2nd tone	má	陽平/阳平 high rising	dá 答(answer)
3rd tone	mǎ	上聲/上声 low dipping	dǎ 打(hit)
4th tone	mà	去聲/去声 high falling	dà 大(big)

The neutral tone, occurs on stressless syllables and has a pitch entirely determined by the tones of adjacent syllables. However, a neutral will never act as the starting tone. Neutral tones are usually unmarked. For example, the red parts of the following table are neutral tones.

māma 媽媽/妈妈	yéye 爺爺/爷爷	nǎinai 奶奶	bàba 爸爸
gēge 哥哥	wáwa 娃娃	jiějie 姊姊/姐姐	mèimei 妹妹
zhuōzi 桌子	fángzi 房子	běnzì 本子	jìngzi 鏡子/镜子
jīnzi 金子	yínzi 銀子/银子	zǎoshang 早上	dìshang 地上
dīngzi 釘子/钉子	miánhua 棉花	yǐngzi 影子	yànzi 燕子

## **Tone Mark Placement**

The tone mark is placed over the vowel if there is only one vowel letter.

bù	nà	tè
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If there are two vowels, the tone mark is placed on the first, unless the first vowel is i or u.

kǎi	hēi	qiú	tuī
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If there are three vowels in a syllable, the tone mark is placed on the middle one.

qióng	zhuāng	chuán
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When the tone mark is placed on i, the small dot is removed.

yí	lín	huī
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