

中文

MANDARIN FOR SOCIAL LIFE

# Making Friends

中文 · 交朋友

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From a friendly *nǐ hǎo* to swapping WeChat. Low-pressure openers, real questions, and the art of **keeping it going**.

LESSON 1 OF 6

## 01 Introducing Yourself 自我介绍

A warm, simple self-intro beats a perfect one. Lead with your name, where you're from, and a touch of why you're here. People light up when a foreigner tries Mandarin — that effort is half the charm.

### Core self-intro lines 介绍

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
我叫...	wǒ jiào...	My name is...	Just add your name — works for everyone
我 wǒ I 叫 jiào am called			
我是英国人	wǒ shì yīngguó rén	I'm British	měiguó = American, ào zhōu = Australian
我 wǒ I 是 shì am 英国 yīngguó Britain 人 rén person			
很高兴认识你	hěn gāoxìng rènshi nǐ	Nice to meet you	The standard friendly greeting
很 hěn very 高兴 gāoxìng glad 认识 rènshi to meet 你 nǐ you			
我在学中文	wǒ zài xué zhōngwén	I'm learning Chinese	Instantly endearing — invites help
我 wǒ I 在 zài (in progress) 学 xué learn 中文 zhōngwén Chinese			
我的中文不太好	wǒ de zhōngwén bú tài hǎo	My Chinese isn't great	Humble & charming — people warm up
我 wǒ I 的 de (possessive) 中文 zhōngwén Chinese 不太 bú tài not very 好 hǎo good			
你叫什么名字?	nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?	What's your name?	Turn it back to them right away
你 nǐ you 叫 jiào are called 什么 shénme what 名字 míngzi name			
你是哪里人?	nǐ shì nǎlǐ rén?	Where are you from?	Great follow-up — everyone has a home story
你 nǐ you 是 shì are 哪里 nǎlǐ where 人 rén person			

**YOU**

你好,我叫马克。很高兴认识你!

*nǐ hǎo, wǒ jiào mǎkè. hěn gāoxìng rènshi nǐ!*

Hi, I'm Mark. Nice to meet you!

**HER**

你好!你的中文很好啊。

*nǐ hǎo! nǐ de zhōngwén hěn hǎo a.*

Hi! Your Chinese is really good.

**YOU**

哪里哪里,我在学中文。你叫什么名字?

*nǎlǐ nǎlǐ, wǒ zài xué zhōngwén. nǐ jiào shénme míngzi?*

Oh, not at all — I'm still learning. What's your name?

**HER**

我叫小雨。

*wǒ jiào xiǎoyǔ.*

I'm Xiaoyu.

**CULTURAL NOTE —**

When complimented, a humble deflection like (nǎlǐ nǎlǐ, "where, where" = "oh, not really") is classically polite. You don't have to use it, but recognizing it — and smiling — shows cultural fluency.

## 02 Low-Pressure Openers 搭话

The best openers are **situational and light** — a small observation, a tiny ask for help, a shared moment. No script, just an easy door for the other person to walk through.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
不好意思,可以问一下吗?	<i>bù hǎoyìsi, kěyǐ wèn yíxià ma?</i>	Excuse me, can I ask something?	Universal soft opener
不好意思 <i>bù hǎoyìsi</i> excuse me 可以 <i>kěyǐ</i> may/can 问 <i>wèn</i> ask 一下 <i>yíxià</i> a little 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
这里有什么好喝的?	<i>zhèlǐ yǒu shénme hǎo hē de?</i>	What's good to drink here?	At a bar/café — invites a recommendation
这里 <i>zhèlǐ</i> here 有 <i>yǒu</i> have 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 好喝 <i>hǎo hē</i> good to drink 的 <i>de</i> (particle)			
你也常来这儿吗?	<i>nǐ yě cháng lái zhèr ma?</i>	Do you come here often too?	Light and friendly, not a pickup line
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 也 <i>yě</i> also 常 <i>cháng</i> often 来 <i>lái</i> come 这儿 <i>zhèr</i> here 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
这个地方真不错	<i>zhège dìfang zhēn búcuò</i>	This place is really nice	A shared observation to open with
这个 <i>zhège</i> this 地方 <i>dìfang</i> place 真 <i>zhēn</i> really 不错 <i>búcuò</i> not bad / nice			
你的包很好看	<i>nǐ de bāo hěn hǎokàn</i>	Your bag is really nice	Genuine, specific compliment on a choice
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 的 <i>de</i> (possessive) 包 <i>bāo</i> bag 很 <i>hěn</i> very 好看 <i>hǎokàn</i> good-looking			
我刚来,你有推荐吗?	<i>wǒ gāng lái, nǐ yǒu tuījiàn ma?</i>	I'm new here, any recommendations?	Asking for help is warm & low-stakes
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 刚 <i>gāng</i> just 来 <i>lái</i> arrived 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 有 <i>yǒu</i> have 推荐 <i>tuījiàn</i> recommendation 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			

### TIP — OBSERVATION, NOT INTERROGATION

Open with something you both can see (the place, the music, what they're holding) rather than firing questions. A shared moment feels natural; a quiz feels like pressure. Then let the conversation breathe.

## 03 Questions, Reactions & Topics 聊天

Conversation is a rally: ask, listen, react, share something of your own. Pair these questions with the backchannel sounds from Lesson 0 and you'll keep things flowing easily.

### Get-to-know-you questions 问题

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
你做什么工作?	<i>nǐ zuò shénme gōngzuò?</i>	What do you do for work?	Common & expected early on
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 做 <i>zuò</i> do 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 工作 <i>gōngzuò</i> work			
你平时喜欢做什么?	<i>nǐ píngshí xǐhuan zuò shénme?</i>	What do you like to do?	Opens up hobbies & passions
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 平时 <i>píngshí</i> usually 喜欢 <i>xǐhuan</i> like 做 <i>zuò</i> do 什么 <i>shénme</i> what			
你喜欢什么音乐?	<i>nǐ xǐhuan shénme yīnyuè?</i>	What music do you like?	Easy shared ground
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 喜欢 <i>xǐhuan</i> like 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 音乐 <i>yīnyuè</i> music			
周末你一般干嘛?	<i>zhōumò nǐ yībān gàn má?</i>	What do you usually do on weekends?	Casual, hints at making plans
周末 <i>zhōumò</i> weekend 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 一般 <i>yībān</i> usually 干嘛 <i>gàn má</i> do what			
你去过哪些地方?	<i>nǐ qù guo nǎxiē dìfang?</i>	Where have you traveled?	Travel stories build connection fast
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 去 <i>qù</i> go 过 <i>guo</i> (experienced) 哪些 <i>nǎxiē</i> which 地方 <i>dìfang</i> places			

### Warm reactions 回应

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
太有意思了!	<i>tài yǒuyisi le!</i>	That's so interesting!	Show genuine curiosity
太 <i>tài</i> so/too 有意思 <i>yǒuyisi</i> interesting 了 <i>le</i> (particle)			

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
哇,真厉害!	wā, zhēn lihai!	Wow, that's impressive!	= skilled/awesome — a real compliment
哇 wā wow 真 zhēn really 厉害 lihai impressive			
我也是!	wǒ yě shì!	Me too!	Find common ground out loud
我 wǒ I 也 yě also 是 shì am			
原来是这样	yuánlái shì zhèyàng	Ah, I see / so that's how it is	Shows you were really listening
原来 yuánlái so / it turns out 是 shì is 这样 zhèyàng this way			
我们很像	wǒmen hěn xiàng	We're so alike	Gentle way to build rapport
我们 wǒmen we 很 hěn very 像 xiàng alike			

#### CULTURAL NOTE – SAFE VS SENSITIVE TOPICS

Food, travel, hobbies, hometowns, and movies are friendly, easy ground. Politics is best avoided with new acquaintances. Asking about salary or age can be normal among friends but feels forward from a stranger — let them raise it first.

## 04 Getting Contact — WeChat 微信

In China, **WeChat ( , wēixìn) is everything** — chat, payments, social feed, life. Asking to add WeChat is the natural, low-pressure way to stay in touch. It's the equivalent of "let's swap numbers," but softer.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
加个微信吧?	<i>jiā ge wēixìn ba?</i>	Let's add WeChat?	The classic, casual ask
加 <i>jiā</i> add 个 <i>ge</i> (measure word) 微信 <i>wēixìn</i> WeChat 吧 <i>ba</i> (suggestion)			
扫一下我的二维码	<i>sǎo yíxià wǒ de èrwéimǎ</i>	Scan my QR code	= QR code — how you add each other
扫 <i>sǎo</i> scan 一下 <i>yíxià</i> a little 我 <i>wǒ</i> my 的 <i>de</i> (possessive) 二维码 <i>èrwéimǎ</i> QR code			
我们保持联系	<i>wǒmen bǎochí liánxi</i>	Let's keep in touch	Warm and open-ended
我们 <i>wǒmen</i> we 保持 <i>bǎochí</i> keep 联系 <i>liánxi</i> contact			
我加你还是你加我?	<i>wǒ jiā nǐ háishi nǐ jiā wǒ?</i>	Should I add you or you add me?	Playful, lets her choose
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 加 <i>jiā</i> add 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 还是 <i>háishi</i> or 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 加 <i>jiā</i> add 我 <i>wǒ</i> me			
你也玩朋友圈吗?	<i>nǐ yě wán péngyǒuquān ma?</i>	Do you use Moments too?	= WeChat's social feed
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 也 <i>yě</i> also 玩 <i>wán</i> use/play 朋友圈 <i>péngyǒuquān</i> Moments 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			

**YOU**

跟你聊天很开心。加个微信吧？

*gēn nǐ liáotiān hěn kāixīn. jiā ge wēixìn ba?*

I've really enjoyed talking with you. Want to add WeChat?

**HER**

好啊,我扫你。

*hǎo a, wǒ sǎo nǐ.*

Sure, I'll scan you.

**YOU**

好,这是我的二维码。

*hǎo, zhè shì wǒ de èrwéimǎ.*

Great, here's my QR code.

## A good first message 第一条信息

Reference something specific from your conversation so it doesn't feel generic. Keep it short, warm, and easy to reply to.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
嗨,我是马克!今天聊得很开心 😊	<i>hāi, wǒ shì mǎkè! jīntiān liáo de hěn kāixīn</i>	Hi, it's Mark! Really enjoyed chatting today	Lead with your name + a warm callback
嗨 <i>hāi</i> hi 我 <i>wǒ</i> I 是 <i>shì</i> am 马克 <i>mǎkè</i> Mark 今天 <i>jīntiān</i> today 聊 <i>liáo</i> chat 得 <i>de</i> (particle) 很 <i>hěn</i> very 开心 <i>kāixīn</i> happy			
你说的那家咖啡店叫什么来着?	<i>nǐ shuō de nà jiā kāfēidiàn jiào shénme lái zhe?</i>	What was that café you mentioned called?	A natural reason to continue — and a future plan
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 说 <i>shuō</i> said 的 <i>de</i> (particle) 那 <i>nà</i> that 家 <i>jiā</i> (measure word) 咖啡店 <i>kāfēidiàn</i> café 叫 <i>jiào</i> is called 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 来着 <i>lái zhe</i> (again?)			
改天一起去试试?	<i>gǎitiān yìqǐ qù shìshì?</i>	Want to check it out together sometime?	Light, no-pressure invitation
改天 <i>gǎitiān</i> some other day 一起 <i>yìqǐ</i> together 去 <i>qù</i> go 试试 <i>shìshì</i> try it out			

**TIP — SEND IT THE SAME DAY**

A short message a few hours after you meet keeps the warmth alive and shows you were genuinely glad to connect. Don't overthink it — one friendly line with a small hook beats a paragraph.

## ★ Cutesy disarmers 可爱的一句话

These are **golden**. Self-aware, humble, a little silly — they melt a stranger's guard, earn a laugh, and quietly invite them to help and teach you. An endearing foreigner who tries beats one who's slick. Deploy them when you fumble, when there's a pause, or just to be charming.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
我的中文还在努力中～	<i>wǒ de zhōngwén hái zài nǔlì zhōng~</i>	"My Chinese is still a work in progress~"	When you stumble mid-sentence; play it light.
我 <i>wǒ</i> my 的 <i>de</i> (possessive) 中文 <i>zhōngwén</i> Chinese 还 <i>hái</i> still 在 <i>zài</i> (in progress) 努力 <i>nǔlì</i> trying hard 中 <i>zhōng</i> (ongoing)			
不好意思，我中文太烂了，哈哈	<i>bù hǎoyìsi, wǒ zhōngwén tài làn le, hāhā</i>	"Sorry, my Chinese is so bad, haha"	After a real fumble — laugh at yourself, don't apologise for real.
不好意思 <i>bù hǎoyìsi</i> sorry 我 <i>wǒ</i> my 中文 <i>zhōngwén</i> Chinese 太 <i>tài</i> too 烂 <i>làn</i> terrible 了 <i>le</i> (particle) 哈哈 <i>hāhā</i> haha			
对我好一点嘛，我还在学呢～	<i>duì wǒ hǎo yìdiǎn ma, wǒ hái zài xué ne~</i>	"Be nice to me~ I'm still learning"	Flirty — say it to her with a grin and a small shrug.
对 <i>duì</i> to/toward 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 好 <i>hǎo</i> nice 一点 <i>yìdiǎn</i> a bit 嘛 <i>ma</i> (coaxing) 我 <i>wǒ</i> I 还 <i>hái</i> still 在 <i>zài</i> (in progress) 学 <i>xué</i> learning 呢 <i>ne</i> (particle)			
我说得对吗？	<i>wǒ shuō de duì ma?</i>	"Did I say that right?"	Invites a correction and pulls them in to teach you.
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 说 <i>shuō</i> say 得 <i>de</i> (particle) 对 <i>duì</i> correct 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
教我一个中文词吧？	<i>jiāo wǒ yí ge zhōngwén cí ba?</i>	"Teach me a Chinese word?"	Turns any pause into a mini lesson and a bond.
教 <i>jiāo</i> teach 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 一个 <i>yí ge</i> one 中文 <i>zhōngwén</i> Chinese 词 <i>cí</i> word 吧 <i>ba</i> (suggestion)			

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
可以说慢一点吗？拜托啦～	<i>kěyǐ shuō màn yídiǎn ma? bàituō la~</i>	"Can you speak slowly for me, please~"	When they rattle off too fast; the keeps it cute.
<p>可以 <i>kěyǐ</i> can 说 <i>shuō</i> speak 慢 <i>màn</i> slow 一点 <i>yídiǎn</i> a bit 吗 <i>ma</i> (question) 拜托 <i>bàituō</i> please 啦 <i>la</i> (soft particle)</p>			
我喝点啤酒中文就变好了，哈哈	<i>wǒ hē diǎn pījiǔ zhōngwén jiù biàn hǎo le, hāhā</i>	"My Chinese gets better after a beer, lol"	At a bar or dinner — instant laugh, instant warmth.
<p>我 <i>wǒ</i> I 喝 <i>hē</i> drink 点 <i>diǎn</i> a little 啤酒 <i>pījiǔ</i> beer 中文 <i>zhōngwén</i> Chinese 就 <i>jiù</i> then 变 <i>biàn</i> become 好 <i>hǎo</i> good 了 <i>le</i> (particle) 哈哈 <i>hāhā</i> haha</p>			
这句话我练了一整天哦！	<i>zhè jù huà wǒ liàn le yì zhěng tiān o!</i>	"I practised this one line all day!"	Drop right after nailing a sentence — adorable honesty.
<p>这 <i>zhè</i> this 句 <i>jù</i> (measure word) 话 <i>huà</i> sentence 我 <i>wǒ</i> I 练 <i>liàn</i> practised 了 <i>le</i> (particle) 一整天 <i>yì zhěng tiān</i> a whole day 哦 <i>o</i> (particle)</p>			
教我一句只有本地人才会说的话呀！	<i>jiāo wǒ yí jù zhǐyǒu běndì rén cái huì shuō de huà ya!</i>	"Teach me something only locals say!"	Flatters them as the expert; you'll get great slang.
<p>教 <i>jiāo</i> teach 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 一句 <i>yí jù</i> one phrase 只有 <i>zhǐyǒu</i> only 本地人 <i>běndì rén</i> locals 才 <i>cái</i> only then 会 <i>huì</i> would 说 <i>shuō</i> say 的 <i>de</i> (particle) 话 <i>huà</i> words 呀 <i>ya</i> (particle)</p>			
这个中文怎么说？	<i>zhège zhōngwén zěnmē shuō?</i>	"What's this called in Chinese?"	Point at anything — food, a sign, a drink — endless openers.
<p>这个 <i>zhège</i> this 中文 <i>zhōngwén</i> Chinese 怎么 <i>zěnmē</i> how 说 <i>shuō</i> say</p>			

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
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我中文听起来奇怪的话，你要告诉我哦，哈哈

wǒ zhōngwén  
tīng qǐlái qíguài  
de huà, nǐ yào  
gàosu wǒ o,  
hāhā

"Tell me if my  
Chinese  
sounds weird,  
haha"

Lowers the  
stakes and  
gives them  
permission to  
coach you.

我 wǒ my 中文 zhōngwén Chinese 听起来 tīng qǐlái sounds 奇怪 qíguài weird 的话 de huà if 你 nǐ you  
要 yào should 告诉 gàosu tell 我 wǒ me 哦 o (particle) 哈哈 hāhā haha

★ 我学中文就是为了能跟你这样的人聊天

wǒ xué  
zhōngwén  
jiùshì wèile  
néng gēn nǐ  
zhèyàng de rén  
liáotiān

"I'm learning  
Chinese just  
to talk to  
people like  
you"

Smooth — use  
once, sincerely,  
looking her in  
the eye.

我 wǒ I 学 xué learn 中文 zhōngwén Chinese 就是 jiùshì precisely 为了 wèile in order to  
能 néng be able to 跟 gēn with 你 nǐ you 这样 zhèyàng such 的 de (possessive) 人 rén people  
聊天 liáotiān chat

### DELIVERY IS EVERYTHING

Say them with a smile and a shrug — never as a real apology — and let a little carry the lightness.  
Zero neediness; the charm is the ease, and it turns a stranger into a teammate.

Mandarin for Social Life · Lesson 1 — Making Friends · Open light, listen well, swap WeChat with a smile.