

中文

MANDARIN FOR SOCIAL LIFE

Cold Approach Breakers

中文 · 主动搭话

Real ways to walk up and start something — honest, situational, and playful. None of it works over a phone; all of it needs the person in front of you.

LESSON 5 OF 6

1 Just Say It 直接说

The most disarming thing you can do is be honest. “Can I talk to you for a sec?” — said with a smile — beats any clever line. You don't need a reason to walk over; you are the reason.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
你好，能跟你说句话吗？	<i>nǐ hǎo, néng gēn nǐ shuō jù huà ma?</i>	Hi, can I talk to you?	The honest, direct open
你好 <i>nǐ hǎo</i> hello 能 <i>néng</i> can 跟 <i>gēn</i> with 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 说 <i>shuō</i> say 句话 <i>jù huà</i> a few words 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
我一眼就注意到你了	<i>wǒ yìyǎn jiù zhùyì dào nǐ le</i>	You caught my eye	Warm, not creepy
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 一眼 <i>yìyǎn</i> at a glance 就 <i>jiù</i> right away 注意到 <i>zhùyì dào</i> noticed 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 了 <i>le</i> (particle)			
我犹豫了半天	<i>wǒ yóuyù le bàn tiān</i>	I almost didn't come over	Disarming honesty
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 犹豫 <i>yóuyù</i> hesitated 了 <i>le</i> (particle) 半天 <i>bàn tiān</i> a long while			
你笑起来真好看	<i>nǐ xiào qǐ lái zhēn hǎo kàn</i>	You have a lovely smile	A real compliment
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 笑起来 <i>xiào qǐ lái</i> when you smile 真 <i>zhēn</i> really 好看 <i>hǎo kàn</i> good-looking			
我不是搭讪啊	<i>wǒ bú shì dāshàn a</i>	I'm not hitting on you, but...	Playful — you kind of are
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 不是 <i>bú shì</i> am not 搭讪 <i>dāshàn</i> chatting up 啊 <i>a</i> (softener)			
给我一分钟好吗？	<i>gěi wǒ yì fēnzhōng hǎo ma?</i>	Got a minute?	Low-pressure ask
给 <i>gěi</i> give 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 一分钟 <i>yì fēnzhōng</i> one minute 好吗 <i>hǎo ma</i> OK?			
我叫…，你呢？	<i>wǒ jiào..., nǐ ne?</i>	I'm ..., and you?	Trade names early
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 叫 <i>jiào</i> am called 你呢 <i>nǐ ne</i> and you?			

CONFIDENCE IS THE LINE

The words barely matter — how you say them does. Relaxed shoulders, a real smile, an unhurried voice. Say your opener like you already expect it to go well.

2 Read the Room 看场合

Look around — the room hands you an opener for free. The drink in their hand, the song playing, how packed it is. Notice one thing out loud and you've already started talking.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
这地方不错吧?	<i>zhè dìfang búcuò ba?</i>	Nice spot, right?	A shared observation
这 <i>zhè</i> this 地方 <i>dìfang</i> place 不错 <i>búcuò</i> not bad / nice 吧 <i>ba</i> right?			
平时都这么多人吗?	<i>píngshí dōu zhème duō rén ma?</i>	Is it always this busy?	
平时 <i>píngshí</i> usually 都 <i>dōu</i> always 这么 <i>zhème</i> this 多 <i>duō</i> many 人 <i>rén</i> people 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
你喝的是什么?	<i>nǐ hē de shì shénme?</i>	What are you drinking?	Light and curious
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 喝 <i>hē</i> drink 的 <i>de</i> (particle) 是 <i>shì</i> is 什么 <i>shénme</i> what			
那个看着好吃, 是什么?	<i>nàge kànzhe hǎochī, shì shénme?</i>	That looks good — what is it?	Point at their plate
那个 <i>nàge</i> that 看着 <i>kànzhe</i> looks 好吃 <i>hǎochī</i> tasty 是 <i>shì</i> is 什么 <i>shénme</i> what			
这音乐不错	<i>zhè yīnyuè búcuò</i>	Good music, huh	
这 <i>zhè</i> this 音乐 <i>yīnyuè</i> music 不错 <i>búcuò</i> not bad / nice			
你第一次来吗?	<i>nǐ dì-yī cì lái ma?</i>	First time here?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 第一次 <i>dì-yī cì</i> first time 来 <i>lái</i> come 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
你常来吗?	<i>nǐ cháng lái ma?</i>	Do you come here often?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 常 <i>cháng</i> often 来 <i>lái</i> come 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			

3 By the Venue 看情况

Every place has its own natural way in. A bar has a drink, a queue has the wait, a bookshop has the book. Use what's already in front of you both and the approach feels obvious, not random.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
我请你喝一杯？	<i>wǒ qǐng nǐ hē yì bēi?</i>	Can I buy you a drink?	At a bar
我 <i>wǒ</i> 请 <i>qǐng</i> treat 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 喝 <i>hē</i> drink 一杯 <i>yì bēi</i> one glass			
这儿有人吗？	<i>zhèr yǒu rén ma?</i>	Is this seat taken?	Café or bar
这儿 <i>zhèr</i> here 有 <i>yǒu</i> have 人 <i>rén</i> someone 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
这队也太长了	<i>zhè duì yě tài cháng le</i>	This line is brutal	In a queue
这 <i>zhè</i> this 队 <i>duì</i> queue 也 <i>yě</i> really (emph.) 太 <i>tài</i> too 长 <i>cháng</i> long 了 <i>le</i> (particle)			
那本书好看吗？	<i>nà běn shū hǎokàn ma?</i>	Is that book any good?	Bookshop
那 <i>nà</i> that 本 <i>běn</i> (book) 书 <i>shū</i> book 好看 <i>hǎokàn</i> good (to read) 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
这个有人用吗？	<i>zhège yǒu rén yòng ma?</i>	Are you using this?	At the gym
这个 <i>zhège</i> this 有 <i>yǒu</i> have 人 <i>rén</i> someone 用 <i>yòng</i> using 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
你们怎么认识的？	<i>nǐmen zěnmē rènshi de?</i>	How do you all know each other?	At a party
你们 <i>nǐmen</i> you (plural) 怎么 <i>zěnmē</i> how 认识 <i>rènshi</i> know each other 的 <i>de</i> (particle)			
我能坐这儿吗？	<i>wǒ néng zuò zhèr ma?</i>	Mind if I sit here?	
我 <i>wǒ</i> 能 <i>néng</i> can 坐 <i>zuò</i> sit 这儿 <i>zhèr</i> here 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			

LET THE PLACE DO THE WORK

You don't need a clever line — you need the thing that's already in front of both of you. Name it, ask about it, react warmly to the answer. A room you share becomes a conversation.

4 Make Them Smile 开玩笑

A little playfulness lowers the stakes for both of you. Tease lightly, make a tiny bet, claim you two “match” — give them something fun to push back on, not just a question to answer.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
你帮我评评理	<i>nǐ bāng wǒ píngpíng lǐ</i>	You've got to settle something	Pulls them in
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 帮 <i>bāng</i> help 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 评评理 <i>píngpíng lǐ</i> judge / settle it			
你肯定很受欢迎吧?	<i>nǐ kěndìng hěn shòu huānyíng ba?</i>	You must be popular, huh	Teasing compliment
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 肯定 <i>kěndìng</i> surely 很 <i>hěn</i> very 受欢迎 <i>shòu huānyíng</i> popular 吧 <i>ba</i> right?			
品味不错嘛, 跟我一样	<i>pǐnwèi búcuò ma, gēn wǒ yíyàng</i>	Good taste — we match	Find a tiny thing in common
品味 <i>pǐnwèi</i> taste 不错 <i>búcuò</i> not bad / good 嘛 <i>ma</i> (softener) 跟 <i>gēn</i> with 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 一样 <i>yíyàng</i> the same			
带我逛逛呗?	<i>dài wǒ guàngguang bei?</i>	Show me around?	Playful and bold
带 <i>dài</i> take 我 <i>wǒ</i> me 逛逛 <i>guàngguang</i> stroll around 呗 <i>bei</i> (coaxing)			
老实说, 这儿值得来吗?	<i>lǎoshí shuō, zhèr zhídé lái ma?</i>	Honestly — is this place worth it?	Casts them as the expert
老实说 <i>lǎoshí shuō</i> honestly 这儿 <i>zhèr</i> here 值得 <i>zhídé</i> worth 来 <i>lái</i> coming 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
不打招呼我会后悔的	<i>bù dǎ zhāohu wǒ huì hòuhuǐ de</i>	I'd regret not saying hi	Charming and true
不 <i>bù</i> not 打招呼 <i>dǎ zhāohu</i> say hi 我 <i>wǒ</i> I 会 <i>huì</i> would 后悔 <i>hòuhuǐ</i> regret 的 <i>de</i> (particle)			
你也不是本地人吧?	<i>nǐ yě bú shì běndì rén ba?</i>	You're not local either, right?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 也 <i>yě</i> also/either 不是 <i>bú shì</i> are not 本地人 <i>běndì rén</i> a local 吧 <i>ba</i> right?			

5 Keep It Going 接着聊

You got the opener out — now don't let the silence land. Have one easy follow-up ready: their name, where they're from, a soft invite. Curiosity is what keeps it alive.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	NOTE
你叫什么？	<i>nǐ jiào shénme?</i>	What's your name?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 叫 <i>jiào</i> called 什么 <i>shénme</i> what			
你是本地人吗？	<i>nǐ shì běndì rén ma?</i>	Are you from here?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 是 <i>shì</i> are 本地人 <i>běndì rén</i> a local 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
你做什么工作？	<i>nǐ zuò shénme gōngzuò?</i>	What do you do?	
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 做 <i>zuò</i> do 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 工作 <i>gōngzuò</i> work / job			
等下有事吗？	<i>děng xià yǒu shì ma?</i>	Got plans later?	Soft test for time together
等下 <i>děng xià</i> later 有事 <i>yǒu shì</i> have plans 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
改天一起喝咖啡？	<i>gǎitiān yìqǐ hē kāfēi?</i>	Coffee sometime?	The light invite
改天 <i>gǎitiān</i> another day 一起 <i>yìqǐ</i> together 喝 <i>hē</i> drink 咖啡 <i>kāfēi</i> coffee			
加个微信？	<i>jiā ge wēixìn?</i>	Add WeChat?	The exchange
加 <i>jiā</i> add 个 <i>ge</i> (measure) 微信 <i>wēixìn</i> WeChat			
还想再见到你	<i>hái xiǎng zài jiàn dào nǐ</i>	I'd love to see you again	
还 <i>hái</i> still 想 <i>xiǎng</i> want 再 <i>zài</i> again 见到 <i>jiàn dào</i> see 你 <i>nǐ</i> you			

YOU

你好，能跟你说句话吗？

nǐ hǎo, néng gēn nǐ shuō jù huà ma?

Hi, can I say something?

HER

可以啊。

kěyǐ a.

Sure.

YOU

这地方不错吧？你常来吗？

zhè dìfāng búcuò ba? nǐ cháng lái ma?

Nice spot, right? Come here often?

HER

偶尔来。

ǒu'ěr lái.

Once in a while.

YOU

那…改天一起喝咖啡？

nà... gǎitiān yìqǐ hē kāfēi?

Then... coffee sometime?

★ One-Breath Openers 一句话

When nerves hit, short wins. Each of these is two or three words — impossible to fumble. Say it, smile, and let their reply carry the rest.

CHINESE	PINYIN (TONES)	ENGLISH	WHEN TO DROP IT
你好!	<i>nǐ hǎo!</i>	Hi!	The simplest open there is
你 <i>nǐ</i> you 好 <i>hǎo</i> good			
问一下	<i>wèn yíxià</i>	Quick question	Softens whatever comes next
问 <i>wèn</i> ask 一下 <i>yíxià</i> a moment / briefly			
我请你喝一杯?	<i>wǒ qǐng nǐ hē yì bēi?</i>	Drink?	At a bar, with a smile
我 <i>wǒ</i> I 请 <i>qǐng</i> treat 你 <i>nǐ</i> you 喝 <i>hē</i> drink 一杯 <i>yì bēi</i> one glass			
这儿有人吗?	<i>zhèr yǒu rén ma?</i>	Seat taken?	At a bar or café
这儿 <i>zhèr</i> here 有 <i>yǒu</i> have 人 <i>rén</i> someone 吗 <i>ma</i> (question)			
这地方不错吧?	<i>zhè dìfāng búcuò ba?</i>	Nice spot, right?	A shared observation
这 <i>zhè</i> this 地方 <i>dìfāng</i> place 不错 <i>búcuò</i> not bad / nice 吧 <i>ba</i> right?			
有什么推荐?	<i>yǒu shénme tuījiàn?</i>	Any tips?	Casts them as the local expert
有 <i>yǒu</i> have 什么 <i>shénme</i> what 推荐 <i>tuījiàn</i> recommendation			

DELIVERY BEATS VOCABULARY

A two-word question with a relaxed smile lands better than a perfect sentence said nervously. Keep your shoulders down and your tone light.