THE CHINA HELPER

FREE STUDENT RESOURCE

FOUR YOU WILL USE ON DAY ONE

01

你好

Nǐ hǎo

Hello

02

谢谢

Xièxie

Thank you

03

多少钱?

Duōshao qián?

How much?

04

我需要帮助

Wǒ xūyào bāngzhù

I need help

Essential Chinese Phrases

Fifty phrases that actually get used by international students in China - with pinyin, plain English and the moment each one is for. Point, read, speak.

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PART 01
Greetings & social

PART 02
Campus life

PART 03
Food & restaurants

PART 04
Shopping

PART 05
Transport

PART 06
Mobile payment

PART 07
Emergencies

START HERE

How to use these fifty phrases

You do not need to speak Chinese to survive in China - but you do need about fifty phrases, said roughly right, at the right moment. Every line here is something students use weekly: ordering food, paying, finding the gate, and the four or five sentences that matter when something goes wrong.

Read it like this

- [ ] **Chinese** - point at it if your pronunciation fails
- [ ] **Pinyin** - the pronunciation, read as English
- [ ] **English** - what it means
- [ ] **Grey line** - when to say it

Three habits that get you further

- [ ] Open with **请问** before any question
- [ ] Slow down - do not raise your voice
- [ ] Learn the pinyin, not an English spelling

The four tones

妈	mā	First tone - high and level. Hold it flat, like singing one note.
麻	má	Second tone - rising, like the end of a question in English.
马	mǎ	Third tone - dips down then comes back up. Short and low.
骂	mà	Fourth tone - short, sharp and falling, like saying 'no!'.

Tones change the word. mā 妈 is "mother", mǎ 马 is "horse", mà 骂 is "to scold". Get the tone wrong and you say a different word - so aim for recognisable, not perfect.

Five sounds that trip people up

- [ ] **zh** - like 'j' in 'jeep', but with the tongue curled back
- [ ] **x** - a soft hiss, between 's' and 'sh'
- [ ] **q** - like 'ch' in 'cheese', tongue forward
- [ ] **c** - like 'ts' in 'cats'
- [ ] **ü** - like German 'ü': say 'ee' with rounded lips (in 'nǚ' 女)

ONE ORDER, START TO FINISH

A canteen conversation in five lines

你好	*Nǐ hǎo*	Hello - get the server's attention
我想点这个	*Wǒ xiǎng diǎn zhège*	I want this one (point at the menu)
不要辣	*Bú yào là*	No chilli, please
这个多少钱?	*Zhège duōshao qián?*	How much is this?
谢谢，很好吃	*Xièxie, hěn hǎo chī*	Thanks, it was great

PART 1 · BASIC GREETINGS & SOCIAL

Basic Greetings

01 **你好** *Nǐ hǎo*
Hello
General greeting for meeting anyone, teachers, classmates, shop keepers.

02 **谢谢** *Xièxie*
Thank you
After receiving help, receiving food, getting service.

03 **不客气** *Bú kèqi*
You're welcome
Reply when other people say "xièxie" to you.

04 **不好意思** *Bù hǎoyìsi*
Sorry / Excuse me
Apologize for small mistakes, get people's attention in crowded places.

05 **请问** *Qǐngwèn*
Excuse me / May I ask
Before asking strangers questions (polite opening for all questions).

06 **很高兴认识你** *Hěn gāoxìng rènshi nǐ*
Nice to meet you
When you meet new friends for the first-time.

07 **再见** *Zài jiàn*
Goodbye
Say goodbye when you leave.

08 **没关系** *Méi guānxì*
It's okay / No problem
Reply when someone says sorry to you.

PART 2 · CAMPUS & UNIVERSITY LIFE

Campus

09 **教室在哪里?** *Jiàoshì zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the classroom?
Finding your lecture room for class.

10 **我是留学生** *Wǒ shì liúxuéshēng*
I am an international student
Explain your identity to university staff.

11 **国际学生办公室在哪里?** *Guójì xuéshēng bàngōngshì zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the international office?
When you need help from student-affairs office.

12 **我不明白** *Wǒ bù míngbái*
I don't understand
You cannot follow what other people are saying.

13 **请说慢一点** *Qǐng shuō màn yìdiǎn*
Please speak slowly
Native speakers talk too fast for you to catch.

14 **可以写下来吗?** *Kěyǐ xiě xiàlái ma?*
Can you write it down?
You cannot understand spoken words, want to read Chinese text.

15 **请问几点上课?** *Qǐngwèn jǐ diǎn shàngkè?*
What time does class start?
Ask class starting time.

16 **我听不懂中文** *Wǒ tīng bù dǒng Zhōngwén*
I cannot understand Chinese
For situations your listening ability is limited.

Politeness shortcut: 请问 (qǐngwèn) before any question, 谢谢 (xièxie) after any help, and 不好意思 (bù hǎoyìsi) when you bump into someone. These three carry most of the politeness you need on a normal day.

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PART 3 · FOOD & RESTAURANTS

Food

17 **我想点这个** *Wǒ xiǎng diǎn zhège*
I want this one
Order food by pointing at menu or dishes.

18 **不要辣** *Bú yào là*
No spicy
You cannot eat spicy food at all.

19 **少一点辣** *Shǎo yìdiǎn là*
Less spicy
You can accept small amount of chili.

20 **这个多少钱?** *Zhège duōshao qián?*
How much is this?
Ask price for dishes or snacks.

21 **可以打包吗?** *Kěyǐ dǎbāo ma?*
Can I take it away?
You want to take leftover food to-go.

22 **我不吃猪肉** *Wǒ bù chī zhūròu*
I do not eat pork
Religious / personal dietary requirement.

23 **谢谢，很好吃** *Xièxie, hěn hǎo chī*
Thank you, it is delicious
Compliment food after eating.

PART 4 · SHOPPING & DAILY LIFE

Shopping

24 **多少钱?** *Duōshao qián?*
How much?
Ask price for goods.

25 **太贵了** *Tài guì le*
Too expensive
You think the price is too high.

26 **有没有?** *Yǒu méiyǒu?*
Do you have ...?
Ask whether the shop sells a certain item.

27 **我想买这个** *Wǒ xiǎng mǎi zhège*
I want to buy this
Point at product you want to purchase.

28 **可以便宜一点吗?** *Kěyǐ piányi yìdiǎn ma?*
Can you make it cheaper?
Bargain in small local street shops (Note: Not for supermarkets or big-chain stores).

29 **我看一看** *Wǒ kàn yī kàn*
I'm just looking
Shop assistant offers help but you are only browsing.

PART 5 · TRANSPORTATION

Transportation

30 **地铁站在哪里?** *Dìtiě zhàn zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the subway station?
Look for metro entrance.

31 **请带我去这里** *Qǐng dài wǒ qù zhèlǐ*
Please take me here
Show address / map screenshot to taxi driver.

32 **需要多久?** *Xūyào duō jiǔ?*
How long does it take?
Ask estimated travel time.

33 **我在这里下车** *Wǒ zài zhèlǐ xià chē*
I want to get off here
Tell taxi / bus driver your stop.

34 **请问这路公交车到吗?** *Qǐngwèn zhè lù gōngjiāo chē dào ma?*
Does this bus go there?
Check bus route.

PART 6 · MOBILE PAYMENT & TECHNOLOGY

Mobile Payment

35 **可以用支付宝吗？** *Kěyǐ yòng Zhīfùbǎo ma?*
Can I pay by Alipay?
Ask shops whether they accept Alipay.

36 **我扫不了二维码** *Wǒ sǎo bù liǎo èr wéi mǎ*
I cannot scan the QR code
Your phone fails to scan merchant QR payment code.

37 **我的手机号不能用** *Wǒ de shǒujī hào bù néng yòng*
My phone number doesn't work
SIM-card / mobile service failure.

38 **可以用微信支付吗？** *Kěyǐ yòng Wēixìn zhīfù ma?*
Can I pay with WeChat Pay?
Check WeChat Pay acceptance.

39 **没有网络** *Méiyǒu wǎngluò*
No internet / No Wi-Fi
Mobile data or Wi-Fi connection fails.

PART 7 · EMERGENCY & IMPORTANT SITUATIONS

Emergency

40 **我需要帮助** *Wǒ xūyào bāngzhù*
I need help
General emergency situation.

41 **我的护照丢了** *Wǒ de hùzhào diū le*
I lost my passport
Your passport is missing, contact police or consulate.

42 **医院在哪里？** *Yīyuàn zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the hospital?
Medical emergency, need to find clinic / hospital.

43 **请报警** *Qǐng bào jǐng*
Please call the police
Serious safety-related emergency.

44 **我不舒服** *Wǒ bù shūfu*
I am feeling sick /unwell
Physical discomfort, seek medical help.

45 **我想要去领事馆** *Wǒ xiǎng yào qù lǐngshìguǎn*
I want to go to the consulate
When your passport is lost or you need consular assistance.

46 **我听不懂，请找会英语的人** *Wǒ tīng bù dǒng, qǐng zhǎo huì Yīngyǔ de rén*
I cannot understand, please find someone who speaks English
Hospital / police / office when no English-speaking staff nearby.

47 **我的钱包不见了** *Wǒ de qiánbāo bù jiàn le*
My wallet is missing
Lost cash or physical wallet.

48 **可以帮我叫救护车吗？** *Kěyǐ bāng wǒ jiào jiùhùchē ma?*
Can you call an ambulance for me?
Serious medical emergency.

49 **我迷路了** *Wǒ mílù le*
I am lost
Cannot find your destination location.

50 **请慢一点，我有点紧张** *Qǐng màn yìdiǎn, wǒ yǒu diǎn jǐnzhāng*
Please slow down, I am a little nervous
Stressful official / emergency situations.

Save these numbers before you need them

110	120	119	12345
POLICE	AMBULANCE	FIRE	CITY HOTLINE

我需要帮助 (Wǒ xūyào bāngzhù) - say this first, then show the address written in Chinese.

LEARN THESE FIRST

Ten phrases to memorise before you land

你好 *Nǐ hǎo*
Hello
General greeting for meeting anyone, teachers, classmates, shop keepers.

教室在哪里? *Jiàoshì zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the classroom?
Finding your lecture room for class.

这个多少钱? *Zhège duōshao qián?*
How much is this?
Ask price for dishes or snacks.

地铁站在哪里? *Dìtiě zhàn zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the subway station?
Look for metro entrance.

我需要帮助 *Wǒ xūyào bāngzhù*
I need help
General emergency situation.

请问 *Qǐngwèn*
Excuse me / May I ask
Before asking strangers questions (polite opening for all questions).

我想点这个 *Wǒ xiǎng diǎn zhège*
I want this one
Order food by pointing at menu or dishes.

多少钱? *Duōshao qián?*
How much?
Ask price for goods.

请带我去这里 *Qǐng dài wǒ qù zhèlǐ*
Please take me here
Show address / map screenshot to taxi driver.

医院在哪里? *Yīyuàn zài nǎlǐ?*
Where is the hospital?
Medical emergency, need to find clinic / hospital.

YOUR OWN PHRASES - ADD THE ONES YOUR CITY USES

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Free China downloads

Scan for the full library of printable checklists, phrase sheets and guides.

50 Essential Chinese Phrases - *the full list with audio tips*

Chinese Pinyin Guide - *read any pinyin you see*

Chinese Tones Practice - *stop being misunderstood*

Asking for Help in Chinese - *errands and emergencies*

Disclaimer: this phrase sheet is general guidance for international students, not a language course or legal advice. Pinyin is given as a pronunciation aid, not a substitute for listening practice; tones vary by region and speaker. In a medical or safety emergency, call the number for your situation (110 police, 120 ambulance, 119 fire) and ask your university's international office for help.
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