

Pronouncing Mandarin From Pīnyīn Romanization

For many Pīnyīn spellings, you can just follow your instincts. Here are a view spellings that an English speaker needs to pay special attention to.

For more details, go to

<http://anthro.ucsd.edu/~dkjordan//chin/pinyin1.html>

Consonants:

- c = English ts (as in "hats")
- q = English ch (as in "cheat")
- r = something between American r and French j)
- x = English sh (as in "sheet")
- z = English ds (as in "fads")
- zh = English j (as in "Joe"; not like French j!)

Vowels:

- i after h or r = English r (as in "grr")
- i after s, c, z = English z (as in "bzzzz")
- i elsewhere = English ee (as in "beet")
- ian or yan = English yen (as in ¥)
- ui = English way (as in "lost his way")
- u after q, j, x, or y = French u or German ü (Arrange your lips to say oo as in "goo" and then try to say ee as in "see.")
- u elsewhere = English oo (as in "pooh")
- ü or yu = French u or German ü (place your lips to say oo and try to say ee)

Tones.

Tones are pitch patterns. Standard Mandarin has four tones, which can be represented in Romanized text by diacritical marks or (in older texts or Email) by numbers:

1. Macron ("long mark") (ā or a¹) = high, even pitch (first tone)
2. Acute accent (á or a²) = rising pitch (second tone)
3. Caron, hachek, or breve accent (ǎ or a³) = pitch that falls then rises (third tone)
4. Grave accent (à or a⁴) = dropping pitch (fourth tone)

When two third tones come together, the first is pronounced as a second, but still written as a third.