MANDARIN PRONUNCIATION STARTER GUIDE

Feel ZH vs CH

A small starting point for clearer Chinese. Practise with Yee Hang's pronunciation reel; listen before you repeat.

TRY THE HAND TEST

Hold your hand a few centimetres in front of your mouth. Say **zhū**, then **chū**. Feel the stronger puff on **CH**. With **ZH**, there is no strong puff.

SAME TONE. DIFFERENT STARTING SOUND.

知 **zhī** know	吃 **chī** eat
猪 **zhū** pig	出 **chū** go out
找 **zhǎo** look for	吵 **chǎo** noisy; quarrel

Listen once. Repeat each pair three times. Keep the tone the same, and notice the airflow. This test checks airflow; listening helps you check the sound itself.

SOUND PRACTICE

Hear the contrast

Pinyin letters represent Mandarin sounds. Avoid reading every letter as you would in English.

Z, C, S: the sound is made further forward in the mouth.
ZH, CH, SH: the tongue tip is further back.
These pairs change the sound's position, not just the airflow.

早 **zǎo** early	找 **zhǎo** look for
草 **cǎo** grass	吵 **chǎo** noisy; quarrel
三 **sān** three	山 **shān** mountain

MOVE FROM WORDS TO A SENTENCE

我吃猪肉。

Wǒ chī zhūròu.

I eat pork. | CH: stronger puff. ZH: no strong puff.

Keep your voice relaxed. Say it slowly once, then at a comfortable conversational speed.

TONE PRACTICE

Follow the pitch

A tone belongs to the whole syllable. Follow the pitch movement in your own comfortable voice range.

1

mā

high and level

2



má

rising

3



mǎ

low; may rise

4



mà

falling

Third-tone tip: in connected speech, it often stays low. Do not force a big dip and rise on every third tone. Before another third tone, the first becomes rising: **nǐ hǎo** is said like **ní hǎo**.

SAME SOUNDS. DIFFERENT TONES.

买 **mǎi**	buy	卖 **mài**	sell
汤 **tāng**	soup	糖 **táng**	sugar

Cover the pinyin. Can you remember each word’s tone?
Uncover it, check, then say the whole word again.

YOUR DAILY PRACTICE

Your 5-minute routine

Choose one contrast for today. A few attentive repetitions are more useful than rushing through every word.

1 MIN **Listen**

Replay one short section of Yee Hang's reel. Listen to the contrast before speaking.

1 MIN **Feel**

Practise zhū / chū with your hand in front of your mouth. Notice the stronger puff on CH.

1 MIN **Repeat**

Choose one pair. Repeat each word three times, keeping its tone and sound together.

1 MIN **Use it**

Say: Wǒ chī zhūròu. Slowly first, then at a comfortable conversational speed.

1 MIN **Record and compare**

Record one short attempt. Compare it with the model and choose just one thing to adjust.

References: Cambridge Language Centre | Wenlin Institute

Want feedback from Yee Hang?

Join my live pronunciation class. Practise sounds, tones and useful sentences, with personal feedback.

Explore classes at learnzhongyu.com/courses