

MANDARIN PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

You may have noticed that the same word in Chinese can be spelled a variety of ways with the Roman alphabet. Older translations generally use the method developed by Thomas Wade and Herbert Giles in the 1800s, called “Wade-Giles.” Most modern students of Chinese and scholars (and the museum) use the method developed by the Chinese government in the 1950s called pinyin, Chinese for “spelled sound.”

	Pinyin	Wade-Giles	Pronunciation
Consonants	X	Hs	sh sound, like “shoe”
	Zh	Ch	A soft “j,” like “Joe”
	R	J	Halfway between an English “r” and “j” sound
	C	Ts	A “ts” sound, like the end of “wits”
	Q	Ch’	A “ch” sound, like “chew”
	Z	Ts or tz	“dz” sound like in “adze”
	B	P	Like the English “B”
	J	J	Exactly like the English “j,” not the French one
Vowels			
	i (after h, r, c, or z)		Short “I,” as in hit
	i (elsewhere)		“ee” sound as in “beet”
	Ü or 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		“oo” as in “you”
	A		“ah”
	E	U, o	“Uh” or Short “e”
	O		“oh”
Vowel Combos			
	ui		Like the English word, “way”
	uo		Like the English “whoa”
	iu		“eo” as in the name Leo, but with the accent on the “o”
	ai		Long “i” sound, like in “tie”
	Ei		Long “a” sound, like “bay”
	Uang		“wong,” rhymes with “long”
	Ie		Like the English, “yeah”
	Uai		Like the English, “why”