

你

Basic phrases

Greetings, thanks and the phrases that save a conversation when you don't understand each other.

Hello

你好

nǐ hǎo

Hello (polite)

您好

nín hǎo

Thank you

谢谢

xièxie

You're welcome

不客气

bú kèqi

Sorry

对不起

duìbuqǐ

Excuse me

不好意思

bù hǎoyìsi

Goodbye

再见

zàijiàn

Yes, right

对

duì

No, that's not it

不是

bú shì

No, thank you

不用了，谢谢

bú yòng le, xièxie

I don't speak Chinese

我不会说中文

wǒ bú huì shuō Zhōngwén

Do you speak English?

你会说英语吗？

nǐ huì shuō Yīngyǔ ma?

I don't understand

我听不懂

wǒ tīng bu dǒng

Please say it again

请再说一遍

qǐng zài shuō yí biàn

Please write it down

请写下来

qǐng xiě xiàlai

Please speak into my phone

请对着手机说

qǐng duìzhe shǒujī shuō

Just a moment

等一下

děng yíxià

How much?

多少钱？

duōshao qián?

Good to know

- 你好 nǐ hǎo is the everyday hello. With older people, officials and hotel staff, 您好 nín hǎo is more polite.
- 谢谢 xièxie goes a long way: people appreciate the effort even if the rest of the conversation happens through a translator.
- If someone answers you in fast Chinese, “请写下来 qǐng xiě xiàlai” (please write it down) or “请对着手机说 qǐng duìzhe shǒujī shuō” (please speak into my phone) moves the conversation to a translator app.
- Numbers are often shown with one hand: six is the thumb and little finger, seven is the fingertips pinched together, eight is the thumb and index finger, nine is a hooked index finger, ten is crossed index fingers or a fist.