SAYMEI · EVERYDAY CHINESE · CHEAT SHEET

How to Say Beautiful and Pretty in Chinese

Pretty and beautiful are both 漂亮 (piàoliang), so you're pretty is 你很漂亮 (nǐ hěn piàoliang). Here's when 美 (měi) fits better, how to tell a man he's handsome, and how people answer a compliment.



漂亮 piàoliang Pretty, beautiful

Sounds like pyow-lyahng. piào falls: 4th tone, liang light: neutral tone. If someone says it to you: 哪里哪里 (nǎlǐ nǎlǐ), Oh, not at all.

Which one fits?

A friend looks great	你今天真漂亮！ Nǐ jīntiān zhēn piàoliang! You look really pretty today!
Your partner	你好美。 Nǐ hǎo měi. You're so beautiful.
A view or a sunset	风景好美啊！ Fēngjǐng hǎo měi a! What a beautiful view!
Someone's outfit	你这件衣服很好看。 Nǐ zhè jiàn yīfu hěn hǎokàn. That outfit looks great on you.
A colleague's work	这个设计很漂亮。 Zhège shèjì hěn piàoliang. This design is beautiful.
He looks sharp	你今天很帅！ Nǐ jīntiān hěn shuài! You look sharp today!
Calling a waiter	帅哥，买单！ Shuàigē, mǎidān! Excuse me, the check, please!

11 ways to say beautiful and pretty in Chinese

PRETTY AND BEAUTIFUL, FOR A PERSON

漂亮 piàoliang Pretty, beautiful EVERYDAY

你很漂亮 nǐ hěn piàoliang You're pretty / You're beautiful EVERYDAY

你好美 nǐ hǎo měi You're so beautiful WARM

好看 hǎokàn Good-looking, nice to look at EVERYDAY

HANDSOME, AND WHAT PEOPLE CALL STRANGERS

帅 shuài Handsome EVERYDAY

帅哥 shuàigē Handsome guy PLAYFUL

美女 měinǚ Beautiful woman PLAYFUL

BEAUTIFUL, FOR PLACES AND THINGS

好美 hǎo měi So beautiful CASUAL

真美 zhēn měi Really beautiful EVERYDAY

美 měi Beautiful EVERYDAY

美丽 měilì Beautiful (written) FORMAL

How to answer a compliment

哪里哪里 nǎlǐ nǎlǐ Oh, not at all POLITE

没有啦 méiyǒu la Nah, not really CASUAL

谢谢 xièxie Thank you EVERYDAY

过奖了 guòjiǎng le You flatter me POLITE

A FRIEND'S NEW HAIRCUT

A: 你剪头发了？很好看！ Nǐ jiǎn tóufa le? Hěn hǎokàn! You got a haircut? It looks great!
B: 真的吗？谢谢！ Zhēn de ma? Xièxie! Really? Thanks!

MEETING AT A PARTY

A: 你今天真漂亮！ Nǐ jīntiān zhēn piàoliang! You look really pretty today!
B: 哪里哪里，你也很漂亮。 Nǎlǐ nǎlǐ, nǐ yě hěn piàoliang. Oh, not at all. You look lovely too.

LOOKING AT PHOTOS

A: 你的照片拍得真好看！ Nǐ de zhàopiàn pāi de zhēn hǎokàn! Your photos are gorgeous!
B: 没有啦，是手机好。 Méiyǒu la, shì shǒujī hǎo. Nah, it's the phone.

ON A TRIP

A: 你看，好美啊！ Nǐ kàn, hǎo měi a! Look, it's so beautiful!
B: 真的很美，我们拍张照吧。 Zhēn de hěn měi, wǒmen pāi zhāng zhào ba. It really is. Let's take a picture.

What to avoid, and why

× Keep compliments to faces, hair, clothes and style. Skip comments on weight or body shape. You may hear older relatives make them, but they can hurt, and from a newcomer they sound rude.

× Go easy on 美女 (měinǚ) at work. It's a common greeting in shops and restaurants, but with colleagues or clients it can sound flirty. Use her name, or her surname and title.

× Keep the 很 (hěn). 你漂亮 (nǐ piàoliang) sounds unfinished, as if a comparison is coming. 你很漂亮 (nǐ hěn piàoliang) is the plain compliment.

Hear every phrase and take the quiz: **saymei.app/tools/beautiful-in-chinese**
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