



PRONUNCIATION • STARTER

Build Pinyin Syllables: Chart & Spelling Guide

Assemble common Standard Mandarin pinyin syllables from legal initial–final groupings, then apply the spelling changes that make a finished syllable look different from its parts.

d + iou + 1 → diū

丢

lose

After an initial, iou contracts to iu; in iu, the tone mark goes on the second written vowel.

By the end, you can...

- ✓ Decide whether a common initial–final combination belongs to the SayMei learner chart
- ✓ Convert analytic final labels into conventional spellings such as liu, gui, you, and yuan
- ✓ Explain why ju contains an underlying ü sound while lu and lü stay distinct



Starter

35–50 minutes, then keep as a reference

22 pages

Answer guide

Self-contained print practice. Audio and web tools are optional.



1

Start with parts, not English spelling

After this page, you can Use a compact analytic inventory before applying the visible spelling rules.

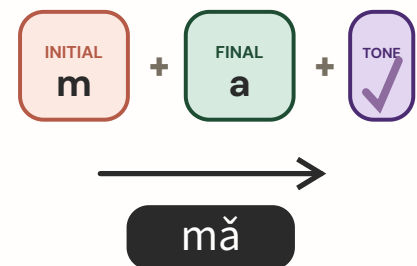
👁 ASSEMBLE

The assembly path

Choose a legal optional initial + base final, apply any spelling change, then add a tone: d + iou + first tone becomes diū. The base-final labels on these pages make the structure visible; finished pinyin uses conventional spellings. The chart organizes symbols—it does not tell your mouth exactly what to do. Listen to a reliable model and use articulation guidance alongside it.

Put it in your own words.

Cover this card and explain the idea in one sentence.



A visual anchor for this page's idea



2

Start with parts, not English spelling CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use a compact analytic inventory before applying the visible spelling rules.

ASSEMBLE

Common learner final families

Family	Base-final labels	Reading note
Other written finals	a · o · e · ai · ei · ao · ou · an · en · ang · eng · ong · er	No leading i, u, or ü; ong takes consonant initials and er stands alone here
i-series	i · ia · ie · iao · iou · ian · in · iang · ing · iong	iou contracts to iu after an initial
u-series	u · ua · uo · uai · uei · uan · uen · uang · ueng	uei and uen contract to ui and un after an initial
ü-series	ü · üe · üan · ün	Dots disappear after j q x and in zero-initial yu spellings
Special written i	zi ci si · zhi chi shi ri	This i continues the consonant posture; do not pronounce it like the i in ji qi xi

**Find, cover, recall**

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



3

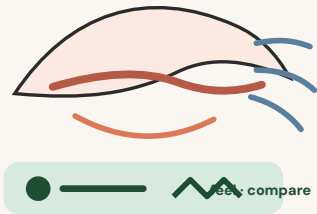
Legal groupings: lips, tongue front, and tongue back

After this page, you can Check the three broad initial families that combine with open, i-, and u-series finals.

CHECK

Base finals by initial family

Read ‘shared’ first, then add the listed exceptions for that initial. Lists use base-final labels, before iu/ui/un contractions.



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Initial family	Shared legal base finals	Per-initial additions
b p m f	a an ang ei en eng o u	b: ai ao i ian iao ie in ing · p: ai ao i ian iao ie in ing ou · m: ai ao e i ian iao ie in ing iou ou · f: ou
d t n l	a ai an ang ao e eng i ian iao ie ing ong u uan uo	d: ei ia iou ou uei uen · t: ou uei uen · n: ei en iang in iou ü üe · l: ei ia iang in iou ou uen ü üe
g k h	a ai an ang ao e en eng ong ou u ua uai uan uang uei uen uo	g: ei · k: no addition · h: ei



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



4

Legal groupings: lips, tongue front, and tongue back CONTINUED

After this page, you can Check the three broad initial families that combine with open, i-, and u-series finals.

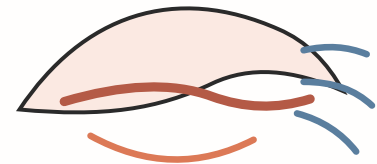
CHECK

A blank is useful information

Do not create a syllable by mechanically joining any initial to any final. For example, b + ia and g + ü are absent from this common learner inventory, while d + ia and n + ü are present. Check before you spell.

Put it in your own words.

Cover this card and explain the idea in one sentence.



A visual anchor for this page's idea



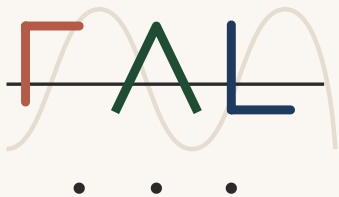
5

Legal groupings: three easily confused rows

After this page, you can Keep palatal, dental, and raised-tip spelling families separate.

COMPARE

j q x, z c s, zh ch sh r



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Initial family	Legal base finals	Important exception or cue
j q x	i ia ian iang iao ie in ing iong iou ü üan üe ün	All three share this set; ü dots disappear in finished spelling
z c s	i a ai an ang ao e en eng ong ou u uan uei uen uo	z also combines with ei; written i is the special consonant-following i
zh ch sh	i a ai an ang ao e en eng ou u uai uan uang uei uen uo	zh adds ei ong ua · ch adds ong · sh adds ei ua
r	i an ang ao e en eng ong ou u uan uei uen uo	Its written i is also the special consonant-following i



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



6

Legal groupings: three easily confused rows

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Keep palatal, dental, and raised-tip spelling families separate.

👁 COMPARE

Same letter, different articulation

The written *i* in *jī* is not the same vowel quality as the written *i* in *zī* or *zhī*. A legal-combination list cannot communicate that contrast by itself. Use the Mandarin Pronunciation Map and the interactive audio chart for tongue placement and sound.

Put it in your own words.

Cover this card and explain the idea in one sentence.



A visual anchor for this page's idea



7

Make the finished spelling

After this page, you can Apply y/w zero-initial spellings, contractions, and the j q x + ü convention.

SPELL

When there is no consonant initial



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Base final	Finished zero-initial spellings
a o e families	a ai an ang ao · o ou · e ei en eng er stay vowel-initial
i-series	i→yi · ia→ya · ie→ye · iao→yao · iou→you · ian→yan · in→yin · iang→yang · ing→ying · iong→yong
u-series	u→wu · ua→wa · uo→wo · uai→wai · uei→wei · uan→wan · uen→wen · uang→wang · ueng→weng
ü-series	ü→yu · üe→yue · üan→yuan · ün→yun



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



8

Make the finished spelling CONTINUED

After this page, you can Apply y/w zero-initial spellings, contractions, and the j q x + ü convention.

SPELL

Two more spelling changes



Use the visual cue, then find the matching row.

Underlying structure	Finished spelling	Examples
iou / uei / uen after an initial	iu / ui / un	dīū · guì · lún
j q x + ü	ju qu xu	jù · qù · xū
j q x + üe / üan / ün	jue quan xun patterns	jué · quán · xún
n or l + ü	Keep the dots	nǚ contrasts with nǔ · lǚ contrasts with lù



Find, cover, recall

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



9

Place tones and show a syllable boundary

After this page, you can Finish the spelling with a correctly placed tone mark and apostrophe when needed.

 **MARK**

Tone-mark decision path

Decision	Rule	Examples
1	If a is present, mark a	hǎo · kuài · yuán
2	Otherwise, if e is present, mark e	xiè · xué · rén
3	In ou, mark o	dōu · kǒu
4	In written iu or ui, mark the second written vowel	liú · guì
5	Otherwise mark the main or only vowel	nǐ · lǔ · wǒ · jiǒng
Neutral tone	Use no tone mark	ma · ne · men

**Find, cover, recall**

Find one useful row. Cover it and reconstruct the target form before checking.



10

Place tones and show a syllable boundary

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Finish the spelling with a correctly placed tone mark and apostrophe when needed.

 **MARK**

Apostrophe before a, o, or e

Inside a multisyllable pinyin word, add an apostrophe before a syllable that begins with a, o, or e when the boundary could be misread. The mark separates syllables; it does not add a sound. Join each pair and apply the rule.

1

WORKED EXAMPLE

Xī + ān

One answer Xī'ān

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

2

nǚ + ér



One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



11

Place tones and show a syllable boundary

CONTINUED

After this page, you can Finish the spelling with a correctly placed tone mark and apostrophe when needed.

 **MARK**

Apostrophe before a, o, or e

Inside a multisyllable pinyin word, add an apostrophe before a syllable that begins with a, o, or e when the boundary could be misread. The mark separates syllables; it does not add a sound. Join each pair and apply the rule.

3

kě + ài
_____**One more from you**Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



12

Check whether the grouping is valid

After this page, you can Retrieve the legal initial-final groupings without reading the chart.

🔍 VALIDATE

Is it in the common learner chart?

Choose VALID or NOT IN THIS CHART before applying any spelling change.

4

WORKED EXAMPLE

b + ia

☐ VALID☒ NOT IN THIS CHART

Why it works: It completes the requested job using the target pattern.

5

d + ia

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

6

f + ou

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

7

g + ü

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



13

Check whether the grouping is valid CONTINUED

After this page, you can Retrieve the legal initial-final groupings without reading the chart.

 **VALIDATE**

Is it in the common learner chart?

Choose VALID or NOT IN THIS CHART before applying any spelling change.

8

q + üe

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

9

zh + iong

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

10

r + uan

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

11

n + ü

☐ VALID☐ NOT IN THIS CHART

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



14

Assemble the finished syllable

After this page, you can Apply contractions, zero-initial spelling, ü rules, and tone-mark placement from memory.

🔗 ASSEMBLE

Write the finished pinyin

Apply the spelling change and tone mark. 'None' means there is no consonant initial.

12

WORKED EXAMPLE

d + iou + tone 1

One answer **diū**

Why it works: iou contracts to iu; mark the second written vowel.

13

g + uei + tone 4



One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



15

Assemble the finished syllable CONTINUED

After this page, you can Apply contractions, zero-initial spelling, ü rules, and tone-mark placement from memory.

ASSEMBLE

Write the finished pinyin

Apply the spelling change and tone mark. 'None' means there is no consonant initial.

14

q + üan + tone 2

15

n + ü + tone 3



One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



16

Assemble the finished syllable CONTINUED

After this page, you can Apply contractions, zero-initial spelling, ü rules, and tone-mark placement from memory.

ASSEMBLE

Write the finished pinyin

Apply the spelling change and tone mark. 'None' means there is no consonant initial.

16

none + iang + tone 1

17

none + ueng + tone 1
_____

One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



17

Assemble the finished syllable CONTINUED

After this page, you can Apply contractions, zero-initial spelling, ü rules, and tone-mark placement from memory.

ASSEMBLE

Write the finished pinyin

Apply the spelling change and tone mark. 'None' means there is no consonant initial.

18

l + uen + tone 2

19

j + iong + tone 3



One more from you

Make a new response with the same target pattern.

Finish from memory. Choose one completed response, cover the page, and make it again.



18

Check your work

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

1

Xī + ān

Xī'ān

2

nǚ + ér

nǚ'ér

3

kě + ài

kě'ài

4

b + ia

NOT IN THIS CHART

5

d + ia

VALID

6

f + ou

VALID

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



19

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

7

g + ŭ

NOT IN THIS CHART

8

q + üe

VALID

9

zh + iong

NOT IN THIS CHART

10

r + uan

VALID

11

n + ŭ

VALID

12

d + iou + tone 1

dīū

Why: iou contracts to iu; mark the second written vowel.

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



20

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

13

g + uei + tone 4

guì

Why: uei contracts to ui; mark the second written vowel.

14

q + üan + tone 2

quán

Why: The ü dots disappear after q; a carries the tone mark.

15

n + ü + tone 3

nǚ

Why: Keep the dots after n and place the tone above ü.

16

none + iang + tone 1

yāng

Why: A zero-initial iang final is written yang.

17

none + ueng + tone 1

wēng

Why: A zero-initial ueng final is written weng.

18

l + uen + tone 2

lún

Why: uen contracts to un after an initial.

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.



21

Check your work CONTINUED

After this page, you can compare your response, understand the repair, and choose one item to replay later.

✓ ANSWER GUIDE

Answers with useful feedback

Closed tasks have a direct answer. Open tasks include a model or success criteria; your response does not need to match word for word.

19

j + iong + tone 3

jiǒng

Why: j combines legally with iong; o carries the tone mark.

Second attempt

Cover the model. Recreate it from memory, change one useful detail, and note the repair you want to revisit.

Do not stop at checking. Circle one repair and make that response again with the answer covered.