



SPEAKING • STARTER

Polite Mandarin Phrases and Everyday Reactions

A printable beginner workbook for thanking, apologizing, getting attention, declining kindly, and reacting naturally in short Mandarin exchanges.

Xièxie! — Bú kèqì.

谢谢! — 不客气。

Thank you! — You're welcome.

A dependable thank-you pair.

By the end, you can...

- ✓ Choose a safe phrase for thanks, apology, attention, or refusal
- ✓ Respond to common social phrases without translating word for word
- ✓ Use short reactions that match good news, surprise, or new information

**Starter****35–45 minutes****18 pages****Answer guide**

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



1

Four useful social jobs

After this page, you can Connect each phrase with the job it performs.

MATCH

Core phrases

Learn the job, not only the English translation.



Qǐngwèn...

请问……

Excuse me / May I ask...

Open a polite question.



Xièxie.

谢谢。

Thank you.

Acknowledge help, a gift, or a kindness.



Duìbuqǐ.

对不起。

I'm sorry.

Use for a genuine apology.



Bù hǎoyìsi.

不好意思。

Sorry / Excuse me.

Often lighter: a small interruption or inconvenience.



Bú kèqì.

不客气。

You're welcome.

A standard reply to thanks.



Méi guānxi.

没关系。

It's okay / No problem.

A reassuring reply to an apology.



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



2

Four useful social jobs CONTINUED

After this page, you can Connect each phrase with the job it performs.

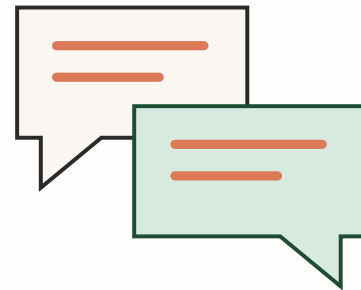
MATCH

One English phrase, several Mandarin choices

English “sorry” can apologize, get attention, or soften a small problem. First identify the social job; then choose 对不起, 不好意思, or another phrase.

Put it in your own words.

Cover this card and explain the idea in one sentence.



A visual anchor for this page's idea



3

Match the response

After this page, you can Retrieve the safest short reply for four everyday moments.

REPLY

Response pairs



Xièxie. — Bú kèqì.

谢谢。 — 不客气。

Thank you. — You're welcome.

Thanks receives a welcome.



Duìbuqǐ. — Méi guānxi.

对不起。 — 没关系。

I'm sorry. — It's okay.

An apology receives reassurance.



Qǐngwèn, xǐshǒujiān zài nǎr?

请问，洗手间在哪儿？

Excuse me, where is the restroom?

请问 opens an information request.



Bù hǎoyìsi, qǐng zài shuō yí biàn.

不好意思，请再说一遍。

Sorry, please say that again.

A small repair in conversation.



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



4

Match the response

 CONTINUED

After this page, you can Retrieve the safest short reply for four everyday moments.

REPLY

Choose the reply

Circle the best beginner response.

1

WORKED EXAMPLE

Someone says 谢谢 after you help.



不客气。



对不起。



真的吗？

Why it works: A standard response to thanks.

2

Someone bumps you lightly and says 对不起.



没关系。



谢谢。



请问。

3

You need to ask a stranger where the restroom is.



请问，洗手间在哪儿？



太好了！



不用了。

4

You did not understand a sentence.



不好意思，请再说一遍。



不客气。



没关系。

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



5

React without a long sentence

After this page, you can Use a short reaction that fits the news you hear.

REACT

Six small reactions



Zhēn de ma?

真的吗?

Really?

Show interested surprise.



Tài hǎo le!

太好了!

That's great!

React to good news.



Shì ma?

是吗?

Is that so?

Invite the speaker to continue; tone and context matter.



Zhèyàng a.

这样啊。

Oh, I see.

Acknowledge new information.



Hǎo a.

好啊。

Sure / Sounds good.

Accept a suggestion warmly.



Méi shì.

没事。

It's fine / No worries.

Reassure after a minor issue.



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



6

React without a long sentence CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use a short reaction that fits the news you hear.

REACT

News and reaction

Choose the reaction that best fits the situation.

5

WORKED EXAMPLE

A friend says: 我找到工作了! (I found a job!)



太好了!



对不起。



不用了。

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

6

A friend explains why the café is closed.



这样啊。



不客气。



请问。

7

A friend suggests tea tomorrow and you like the idea.



好啊。



没关系。



对不起。

8

You hear unexpected but welcome news and want to confirm it.



真的吗?



谢谢你。



请慢一点儿。

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



7

Ask, repair, or decline

After this page, you can Use a complete polite line when conversation gets difficult.

REPAIR

Useful complete lines



Qǐng màn yìdiǎnr.

请慢一点儿。

Please speak a little more slowly.
A clear learning request.



Qǐng zài shuō yí biàn.

请再说一遍。

Please say it again.
Ask for one repetition.



Bù hǎoyìsi, wǒ méi tīng dǒng.

不好意思，我没听懂。

Sorry, I didn't understand.
State the problem without pretending.



Bú yòng le, xièxie.

不用了，谢谢。

No need, thank you.
A short polite refusal of an offer.



Jīntiān bù xíng, bù hǎoyìsi.

今天不行，不好意思。

Today won't work, sorry.
Decline a plan without inventing a reason.



Wǒ xiǎng yíxià.

我想一下。

Let me think about it.
Ask for time before deciding.



Cover + retrieve

Choose one line. Hide it, say it once, then uncover and repair one detail.



8

Ask, repair, or decline CONTINUED

After this page, you can Use a complete polite line when conversation gets difficult.

REPAIR

Make the line safer

Choose the response that is clear and considerate.

9

WORKED EXAMPLE

You are offered more tea but do not want any.



不用了，谢谢。



不要！



没关系。

Why it works: It declines the offer and still acknowledges it.

10

The speaker is too fast.



请慢一点儿。



我想一下。



太好了。

11

You need time before answering an invitation.



我想一下。



不客气。



请问。

12

You cannot meet today.



今天不行，不好意思。



今天不要。



是吗？

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



9

Two conversations

After this page, you can Read complete exchanges and notice how each reply fits the preceding line.

 **ACT**

At a doorway

A small accidental bump

A

A

Duìbuqǐ!

对不起!

I'm sorry!

B

Méi shì.

没事。

No worries.

B

A

A

Xièxie.

谢谢。

Thank you.

B

Bú kèqì.

不客气。

You're welcome.

B

Replay it three ways Read · switch roles · change one detail



10

Two conversations CONTINUED

After this page, you can Read complete exchanges and notice how each reply fits the preceding line.

 **ACT**

A fast sentence

A learner asks for repair

A**A**

Míngtiān shàngwǔ shí diǎn jiàn.

明天上午十点见。

See you tomorrow at ten in the morning.

B

Bù hǎoyìsi, wǒ méi tīng dǒng.

不好意思，我没听懂。

Sorry, I didn't understand.

B**A****A**

Míngtiān, shàngwǔ shí diǎn.

明天，上午十点。

Tomorrow, ten in the morning.

B

Zhèyàng a. Xièxie!

这样啊。谢谢！

Oh, I see. Thank you!

B

Replay it three ways Read · switch roles · change one detail



11

Cold recall and transfer

After this page, you can Retrieve the phrases without rereading, then personalize one exchange.

👁️ RECALL

Complete from memory

Do not look back until all four are complete.

13

WORKED EXAMPLE

Write the standard reply to 谢谢.

One answer Bú kèqì.

不客气。

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

14

Write a polite line asking someone to repeat.



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

Cold recall and transfer CONTINUED

After this page, you can Retrieve the phrases without rereading, then personalize one exchange.

RECALL

Complete from memory

Do not look back until all four are complete.

15

Write a warm reaction to good news.

16

Write a short, polite refusal of an offer.



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.



13

Cold recall and transfer CONTINUED

After this page, you can Retrieve the phrases without rereading, then personalize one exchange.

 **RECALL**

Build your own four-line exchange

17

Choose one real situation. Write an opener, a response, one reaction or repair, and a closing thanks. Include at least two phrases from this workbook.

Success looks like Any coherent four-line exchange with appropriate phrase-to-situation matching is acceptable; pinyin may be used if Hanzi is not yet comfortable.

Choose your mode Write in Hanzi · write in tone-marked pinyin · say and record it



14

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

Someone says 谢谢 after you help.

Bú kèqì.

不客气。

Why: A standard response to thanks.

2

Someone bumps you lightly and says 对不起.

Méi guānxi.

没关系。

Why: Reassure the person after a minor apology.

3

You need to ask a stranger where the restroom is.

Qǐngwèn, xǐshǒujiān zài nǎr?

请问，洗手间在哪儿？

Why: 请问 politely opens the information request.

4

You did not understand a sentence.

Bù hǎoyìsi, qǐng zài shuō yí biàn.

不好意思，请再说一遍。

Why: Name the small problem and request one repeat.

5

A friend says: 我找到工作了！ (I found a job!)

Tài hǎo le!

太好了！

6

A friend explains why the café is closed.

Zhèyàng a.

这样啊。

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



15

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

A friend suggests tea tomorrow and you like the idea.

Hǎo a.

好啊。

8

You hear unexpected but welcome news and want to confirm it.

Zhēn de ma?

真的吗？

9

You are offered more tea but do not want any.

Bú yòng le, xièxiè.

不用了，谢谢。

Why: It declines the offer and still acknowledges it.

10

The speaker is too fast.

Qǐng màn yìdiǎnr.

请慢一点儿。

11

You need time before answering an invitation.

Wǒ xiǎng yíxià.

我想一下。

12

You cannot meet today.

Jīntiān bù xíng, bù hǎoyìsi.

今天不行，不好意思。

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



16

Check your work CONTINUED

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

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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

Write the standard reply to 谢谢.

Bú kèqì.

不客气。

14

Write a polite line asking someone to repeat.

Qǐng zài shuō yí biàn.

请再说一遍。

Why: 不好意思, 请再说一遍 is also correct.

15

Write a warm reaction to good news.

Tài hǎo le!

太好了!

Why: 真的吗? 太好了! is also appropriate when surprise is intended.

16

Write a short, polite refusal of an offer.

Bú yòng le, xièxiè.

不用了, 谢谢。

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



17

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.

17

Choose one real situation. Write an opener, a response, one reaction or repair, and a closing thanks. Include at least two phrases from this workbook.

ONE POSSIBLE ANSWER

A: Bù hǎoyìsi, wǒ lái wǎn le. / B: Méi guānxi. / A: Xièxie nǐ děng wǒ. / B: Bú kèqì. Wǒmen zǒu ba.

A: 不好意思，我来晚了。 / B: 没关系。 / A: 谢谢你等我。 / B: 不客气。我们走吧。

Why: Choose the phrase by its social job—apology, reassurance, thanks, attention, or repair—not by one English gloss alone.

Success criteria: Any coherent four-line exchange with appropriate phrase-to-situation matching is acceptable; pinyin may be used if Hanzi is not yet comfortable.

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