

02

LESSON GUIDE



Dimsum Mandarin 普通话

Lesson summary: Greetings for different times of the day; various ways of saying "goodbye"; saying "thank you" and "you're welcome".

早上好!

Zǎoshàng Hǎo!

Lesson 02

This week, we will learn more greetings, how to say "goodbye", as well as how to say "thank you", and "you're welcome".

Saying Hello

Saying "hello" in the language of the country you are visiting will always be something that locals will appreciate. Last week, we learnt that a simple "hello" is

你好!

Nǐ hǎo!

Hello!

In this lesson, we will learn greetings that you can use at different times of the day.

Let's start with the morning (早上, zǎoshàng):

早上好!

Zǎoshàng hǎo!

Good morning!

For the Chinese, the morning generally lasts from the point you wake up, even if it is still dark outside, up till about twelve noon.

Around noontime, from about eleven in the morning to about one in the afternoon, this is usually lunch time in China. In Mandarin, noontime is 中午 (zhōngwǔ). The greeting during this period of time will be

中午好!

Zhōngwǔ hǎo!

Good noon!

In the afternoon (下午, xiàwǔ), we say:

下午好!

Xiàwǔ hǎo!

Good afternoon!

Once it turns dark, or when it is dinner time, which usually is anytime from 5pm to 7pm, we will have reached nighttime (晚上, wǎnshàng). During this time, to greet someone, we will say

晚上好!
Wǎnshàng hǎo!
Good evening!

Even though 晚上 (wǎnshàng) means “night” or “nighttime”, 晚上好 (wǎnshàng hǎo), would mean in English something closer to “good evening”.

To say farewell to someone at the end of the night, or when you are going to bed, what you would say instead is

晚安!
Wǎn'ān!
Good night!

The character 晚 (wǎn) on its own can mean “night” or “nighttime” as well, while the character 安 (ān) can mean “peaceful”, “to be safe”, or even “to be at peace”. So 晚安 (wǎn'ān) has the sense of wishing someone a peaceful night or a safe night, which is quite a nice way to say “good night”.

As you might have noticed, the general form of greeting someone, is to say “[time period of the day]+好 (hǎo)”. You can see this pattern in the following summary:

Time Period		Greeting
English	Mandarin	
morning	早上 zǎoshàng	早上好 zǎoshàng hǎo
noon	中午 zhōngwǔ	中午好 zhōngwǔ hǎo
afternoon	下午 xiàwǔ	下午好 xiàwǔ hǎo
night	晚上 wǎnshàng	晚上好 wǎnshàng hǎo

Saying Goodbye

A simple “goodbye” in Mandarin is

再见!
Zàijiàn!
Goodbye!

The character 再 (zài) means “again”, and the character 见 (jiàn) means “to see” or “to meet”. So when you say 再见 (zàijiàn), you are basically saying “see you again”, or “until we meet again”. Just like 你好 (nǐhǎo), 再见 (zàijiàn) can be used at any time of the day.

There are various other ways of saying goodbye, which all translates into various forms of “see you + [at a particular time]”, e.g. “see you tomorrow”, “see you next week” etc.

The first phrase we will learn is “see you next time”:

下次见!
Xiàcì jiàn!
See you next time!

When we say 下次见, the first two characters, 下次 (xiàcì), mean “next time”. The third character 见 (jiàn) means “to see” or “to meet”, and it is the same character as the second character in 再见 (zàijiàn).

The next phrase is “see you tomorrow”:

明天见!
Míngtiān jiàn!
See you tomorrow!

The word 明天 (míngtiān) alone means “tomorrow”.

If you have weekly lessons, or if you have book clubs or other meetings that you attend weekly, what you would say at the end a particular session would probably be “see you next week”:

下星期见!
Xià xīngqī jiàn!
See you next week!

You can probably guess that 星期 (xīngqī) means “week”, and 下星期 (xià xīngqī) means “next week”.

You might also have noticed that the general form of greeting someone, is to say “[time of next meeting]+见 (jiàn)”. You can see this pattern in the following summary:

Time of Next Meeting		Greeting
English	Mandarin	
next time	下次 xiàcì	下次见 xiàcì jiàn
tomorrow	明天 míngtiān	明天见 míngtiān jiàn
next week	下星期 xià xīngqī	下星期见 xià xīngqī jiàn

Other Niceties

“Thank you” and “you’re welcome” are also very important phrases that you can learn to use even if you were in a foreign country for only a few days.

“Thank you” is very easy to say in Mandarin:

谢谢!
Xièxie!
Thank you!

To say “thank you very much”, we would say:

非常感谢!
Fēicháng gǎnxiè!
Thank you very much!

感谢 (gǎnxiè) is a more literal form of 谢谢 (xièxie), and 非常 (fēicháng) is a useful word that means “very”.

For “you’re welcome”, there are two common ways to say this. The first way is

不用谢!
Búyòng xiè!
You’re welcome!

不用谢 (búyòng xiè) literally means “no need to thank”.

The other way to say “you’re welcome” is

不客气!
Bú kèqi!
You’re welcome!

客气 (kèqi) is an interesting Chinese word that has the following meaning. If someone visited your house for dinner, and brought along lots of fruits, a bottle of wine, or a gift, you would say that he is very 客气 (kèqi). Or if you visited a friend in another city, and that friend spent lots of time showing you around, or even bought you a nice dinner, you would also say that he is very 客气 (kèqi). So when you say 不客气, you are saying something like “no need to stand on ceremony”.

Supplement Vocabulary

Instead of saying 早上好 (zǎoshàng hǎo) and 下午好 (xiǎowǔ hǎo), you will sometimes also hear the following phrases being used as greetings:

早安!
Zǎo’ān!
Good morning!

午安!
Wǔ’ān!
Good afternoon!

The greetings above, especially 早安 (zǎo’ān), are commonly used in Singapore and Taiwan.

If we pay attention to the greetings 中午好 (zhōngwǔ hǎo) and 下午好 (xiǎowǔ hǎo), we will see this interesting character 午 (wǔ) that’s used in both greetings. The character 午 (wǔ) was related to the keeping of time in ancient China.

Each day in ancient China was divided into twelve Chinese hours, called 时辰 (shíchén), with each 时辰 (shíchén) corresponding to two hours. 午 (wǔ) was the name of the 时辰 (shíchén) from 11am to 1pm. That is why when we say 中午

(zhōngwū), which literally means “middle of the wu shichen”, we are referring to noon time. Similarly, 下午 (xiàwǔ) literally means “after noon”, while 上午 (shàngwǔ) means “before noon”, or “morning”. So to say “good morning”, we can also say

上午好!
Shàngwǔ hǎo!
Good morning!

If you are interested to learn how the Chinese characters 上 (shàng), 中 (zhōng), and 下 (xià) combines with the character 午 (wǔ) to mean “morning”, “noon” and “afternoon”, you can check out the Chinese character pack for this lesson.

Next, using words that we have already learnt, we will put together new words to refer to other points of time that we want to talk about.

The first thing we want to do is to learn how to say “tomorrow morning”. In Mandarin, we always start with the longest time periods, followed by the shortest time periods. So in “tomorrow morning”, “tomorrow” is a longer time period, so it will have to come first,

followed by “morning”. “Tomorrow” is 明天 (míngtiān), and “morning” is 早上 (zǎoshàng), so “tomorrow morning” is 明天早上 (míngtiān zǎoshàng). To refer to other times for tomorrow, you can refer to the table below:

English	Mandarin
tomorrow morning	明天早上 míngtiān zǎoshàng
tomorrow afternoon	明天下午 míngtiān xiàwǔ
tomorrow night	明天晚上 míngtiān wǎnshàng

From these time expressions, we can use the pattern of “[time of next meeting]+见(jiàn)” to say other variations of “goodbye” in Mandarin. These other phrases can be found in the following table:

English	Mandarin
see you tomorrow morning	明天早上见 míngtiān zǎoshàng jiàn
see you tomorrow afternoon	明天下午见 míngtiān xiàwǔ jiàn
see you tomorrow night	明天晚上见 míngtiān wǎnshàng jiàn



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