

Pronunciation Guide

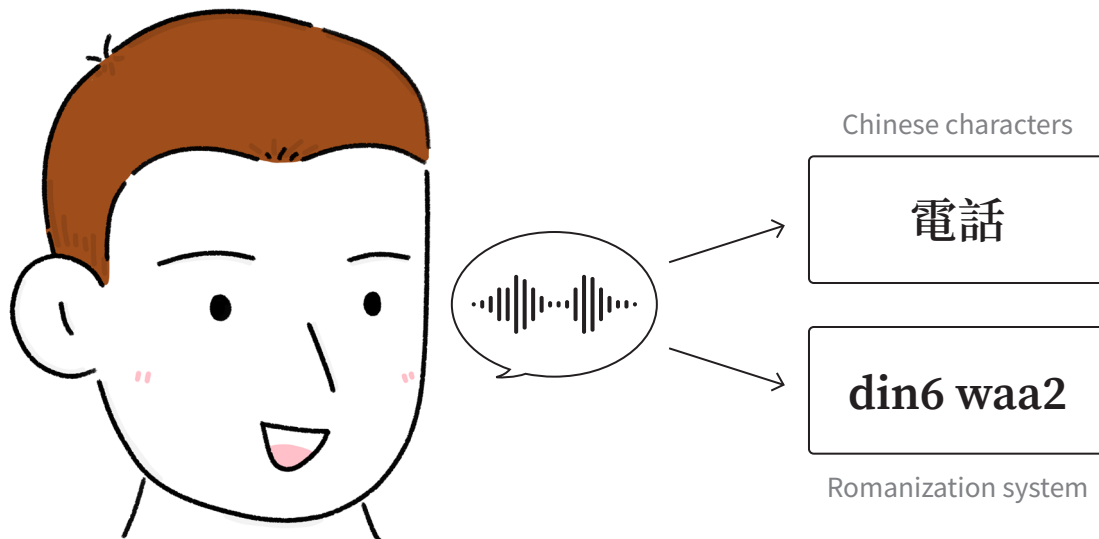
	Initials	Finals	Tones
Introduction	—	—	—
Pronunciation Lesson 1	b, p, d, t g, k, f, s	aa, e, i, o, u	Tone 1 (high level) Tone 2 (high rising)
Pronunciation Lesson 2	z, c	(a), (eo) aai, ai, ei, oi, ui, eoi	Tone 3 (mid level)
Pronunciation Lesson 3	m, n, ng	aa, au, eu, iu, ou	Tone 4 (low falling)
Pronunciation Lesson 4	l, h	oe, yu aam, am, em, im aan, an, in, on, un, eon, yun aang, ang, eng, ing, ong, ung, oeng	Tone 5 (low rising)
Pronunciation Lesson 5	j, w	aap, ap, ep, ip aat, at, it, ot, ut, eot, oet, yut aak, ak, ek, ik, ok, uk, oek	Tone 6 (low level)
Pronunciation Lesson 6	gw, kw	m, ng	Level tones
Pronunciation Lesson 7	—	—	Rising tones Tones at high pitch Tones at low pitch Tone combinations

Introduction

In this pronunciation guide, you will learn to say the different sounds in Cantonese. You will also learn a Romanization system, which is a tool for writing down Cantonese speech. Before you start learning them, let's look at some basic concepts.

1 ~ Writing down Cantonese Speech

To write down Cantonese speech, we can use Chinese characters or a Romanization system.



A **Romanization system** specifies how each sound in Cantonese is written down with the Roman alphabet. By using a Romanization system, we can use letters to write down Cantonese speech easily without knowing Chinese characters.

[🔊 01](#) Listen to the examples.

There are several Romanization systems for Cantonese. The one we use in this book is **Jyutping**.

When we use Chinese characters to write down Cantonese speech, we write down the speech syllable by syllable. That is, we write down each syllable with one Chinese character. For example,

the Cantonese word for *phone* has two syllables. We write down the word as



When we use a Romanization system, we also write down Cantonese speech syllable by syllable. For example, the Cantonese word for *phone* has two syllables. We write down the word as



Notice that we insert a space between syllables.



We will refer to the Cantonese speech we write down with a Romanization system as **Romanized Cantonese** in this book.

In this pronunciation guide, you will learn to say Cantonese speech written down in Romanized Cantonese. Later in this book, you will practice writing down Cantonese speech in Romanized Cantonese yourself.

 **THINK!**

Do you think it is useful to learn how to write down Cantonese speech?



2 ~ Syllable Components

When you see this icon, cover the page and then uncover the content bit by bit because the content at the bottom shows answers to activities at the top.

When we use a Romanization system to write down Cantonese speech, there are three components we need to write down for each syllable. They are the **initial**, **final** and **tone**. Each of them refers to a specific part of a syllable.

🔍 OBSERVE!

Look at the word for *phone* again. Each of its syllables is labeled with the initial, final and tone below. Which part(s) of the syllable do the initial and the final refer to respectively?

Initial	Final	Tone	Initial	Final	Tone
d	in	6	w	aa	2

The initial refers to _____.

The final refers to _____.

The **initial** refers to the beginning consonant (d in din6 and w in waa2).

Initial Beginning Consonant	Initial Beginning Consonant
d	w

The **final** refers to the vowel (i in din6 and aa in waa2) and the ending consonant (n in din6 and not any in waa2). Note that some finals have an ending consonant, but some don't.

Vowel	Final Ending Consonant	Final Vowel
i	n	aa

3 ~ Learning Goals in This Pronunciation Guide

In this pronunciation guide, you will be trained to

- > Say the sounds in Cantonese (the initials, finals and tones)
- > Say Cantonese speech written down in Romanized Cantonese using Jyutping

These skills are essential to your learning journey of Cantonese in the later units.

THINK!

Have you learned a foreign language before? If yes, did you find learning pronunciation easy or difficult?

4 ~ How to Study This Pronunciation Guide

This pronunciation guide consists of seven lessons. Try to study one lesson a day and complete all the seven lessons in one week. To learn more effectively, remember to study on separate days, instead of studying everything all at once.

In each lesson, you will learn a new set of sounds in Cantonese and revise the sounds you have already learned. We will put a lot of emphasis on revision because revision helps you remember the sounds better.

Learning the pronunciation of a new language can sometimes be very challenging. 加油 gaa1 jau5!

加油 gaa1 jau5 literally means ‘add oil’.
We use the expression to encourage someone and show support.