

Put your best foot forward

What to say when you first meet someone.

By www.ChineseForFamilies.com & www.FunWithMandarin.com

We all know how to say hi in Chinese. But "Ni hao" doesn't help to start a conversation. We should always start with "Ni hao ma?" (how are you doing) instead. This invites the other person to answer, "Wo hen hao xie xie" (thanks I'm fine).

nǐ hǎo ma wǒ hěn hǎo xiè xiè
你好嗎？我很好謝謝！

Being polite is important in any language. Sometimes, it can be difficult to know what to say. In Chinese culture it is important to be polite. Many of these values come from Confucius (Kongfuzi in Chinese). Confucius lived from 551BCE to 471 BCE. His lessons taught children to respect their parents, families and friends. This is called filial piety. When you meet a new person for the first time it is a good idea to use very polite words.



When asking for someone's name, in Chinese culture we should always use "qing wen nin gui xing?" (what is your honorable surname.)

Traditional Chinese

Simplified Chinese

- qǐng wèn nín guìxìng qǐngwèn nín guìxìng
1. 請問您貴姓？ 請問您貴姓？

"Hey is that a typo?" Did you recognize the change from "ni" to "nin?" When speaking to someone older than you, it is polite to use "nin" instead of "ni."

Please may I ask, what is your honorable surname?

But, when you talk to other kids, you can ask "ni jiao shenme mingzi?"

Traditional Chinese

Simplified Chinese

- qǐng wèn nǐ jiào shènme míngzì qǐng wèn nǐ jiào shénme míngzì
2. 請問你叫甚麼名字？ 請問你叫什么名字？

To hear these phrases & to learn a song to help you remember polite introductions, visit www.ChineseForFamilies.com or www.FunWithMandarin.com.

Please may I ask, What name are you called?

If you don't know what to say, it's always a good idea to be polite.