

## PRONUNCIATION OF CHINESE *PINYIN* TRANSCRIPTION

### VOWELS

- a usually close to English 'a' in far, (not like pat). Similar to English 'e' in pet when placed '-ian' or 'yan'.
- e Similar to English 'e' in pet when in the diphthong 'ei'. Similar to French 'ê' when in the diphthongs 'ie' or 'ue'. Similar to the 'a' in about when placed 'en' or 'eng'.
- i usually similar to English 'ee' in bee. Similar to English 'e' in pet when in diphthongs 'ui,' blending towards an 'a' as in pay. After c, z, s, ch, zh, sh, and r it is similar to sir.
- o usually close to English 'o' in more. Similar to an English cow when in the diphthong 'ao,' and owe when in the diphthong 'ou'.
- u usually similar to either English 'oo' in boot, or French ü, depending on the context. Placed 'xu,' 'qu,' and 'ju,' and the diphthongs starting with these sounds, 'u' is always pronounced 'ü,' though written 'u.'
- ü similar to French 'ü'. It is written after 'n' or 'l,' because these are the only positions where both 'u' and 'ü' are possible.

### CONSONANTS

- p similar to English 'p' with considerable aspiration (puff of air).
- b neither an English 'p' nor 'b,' with neither aspiration (no puff of air) nor voicing (don't vibrate the vocal cords as you would in English).
- t similar to English 't' with considerable aspiration.
- d neither an English 't' nor 'd,' with neither aspiration nor voicing.
- k similar to English 'k' with considerable aspiration.
- g neither an English 'k' nor 'g,' with neither aspiration nor voicing.
- c like exaggerating the end of 'cats' in English. Touch the tip of the tongue against the gum of the upper teeth, release the tongue with a puff of air.
- z like the *pinyin* 'c' above, but without the aspiration.
- ch somewhat similar to English 'ch' with an aspiration, but with the tip of the tongue rolled to the hard palate.
- zh like the *pinyin* 'ch' above, but without the aspiration.
- q somewhat similar to English 'ch' with aspiration, but 'thinner' and 'tighter', since the front of the tongue is raised and the tip of the tongue is on the back of the lower teeth. The following vowel will be high front i or ü.

- j like the *pinyin* ‘q’ above, but without the aspiration. The following vowel pronunciation rule is the same.
- m similar to English ‘m’.
- n similar to English ‘n’.
- ng similar to English ‘ng’. Occurs only at the end of syllables.
- f similar to English ‘f’ but without ‘biting the lip’ – the teeth touch the back of the lower lip.
- s similar to English ‘s’ but the tip of the tongue is on the back of the lower teeth.
- sh somewhat similar to English ‘sh,’ but with the same tongue placement as the *pinyin* ‘ch’ and ‘zh’.
- x somewhat similar to English ‘sh’ but with the same tongue placement as the *pinyin* ‘q’ and ‘j’ above.
- h a rough sound made by raising the back of the tongue and letting the breath come through the obstructed passage (don’t vibrate the vocal cords).
- l similar to English ‘l’.
- r like the *pinyin* ‘sh’ above, but with voicing.