



Quick Chinese Lessons
by That's Mandarin

Lesson 1



1. To Be | 是 (shì)

Our first Quick Chinese Lesson is about one of the most common Chinese words.

It is the verb 是 (shì), which means "to be". It is equivalent to "am, is, are" in the present tense and "was, were" in the past tense. Use 是 (shì) only with nouns.

STRUCTURE

Pronoun / Noun + 是 (shì) + Noun



她是老师。

Tā shì lǎoshī.

She is a teacher.



他是医生。

Tā shì yīshēng.

He is a doctor.

2. Very | 很 (hěnn)

But to say things like “You are tall” or “China is beautiful”, you’ll need an adverb. The most common Chinese adverb is **很 (hěnn)**, which literally means “**very**”.

STRUCTURE

Pronoun / Noun + 很 (hěnn) + Adjective



你很高。

Nǐ hěnn gāo.

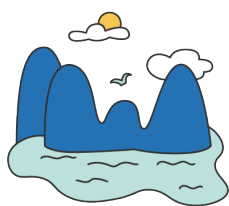
You are tall.



我很好。

Wǒ hěnn hǎo.

I am good.



中国很漂亮。

Zhōngguó hěnn piàoliang.

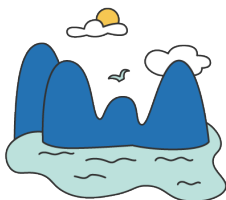
China is beautiful.

3. Very | 非常 (fēicháng)

What if you want to say “China is very beautiful”? In this case, you can use a “stronger” adverb of degree, such as **非常 (fēicháng)**, which is a stronger way to say “very”.

STRUCTURE

Pronoun / Noun + 非常 (fēicháng) + Adjective



中国**非常**漂亮。

Zhōngguó fēicháng piàoliang.

China is very beautiful.

To wrap up, just remember that **是 (shì)** is usually followed by a noun, whereas an adverb like **很 (hěn)** is usually followed by an adjective.

4. Using 的 (de) with Adjectives

In English, it's common to see phrases like “a beautiful park”, “an interesting person”, “a big room”, etc. You don't need to put anything between an adjective and a noun in these cases.

In Chinese, things get a bit more complicated. You will need to add 的 (de) between an adjective and a noun, depending on what adjective it is.

STRUCTURE

Pronoun / Noun + 的 (de) + Noun

Generally speaking, 的 (de) is not needed if the adjective is made of just one character. If an adjective contains two or more syllables, then you'll need 的 (de). Just follow this simple rule and you'll be fine. Let's have a look at some examples:

1. With adjectives made of **more than one character**; use 的 (de):



漂亮的公园

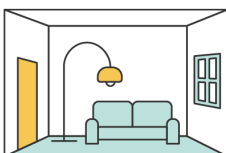
piàoliang de gōngyuán
a beautiful park



有趣的人

yǒuqù de rén
an interesting person

2. With adjectives made of **only one character**; do not add 的 (de):




大房间

dà fángjiān
a big room

Next Steps

We hope you've enjoyed our first lesson!

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