



ONE

**SPEAKING
WITH MANNERS**

The concept of Chinese etiquette, when reflected in language, is demonstrated through many polite words and expressions. The first category are terms of respect, which are used to address others according to the principle of respecting others. Commonly used honorific terms include “qǐng (please), nín (you), guì (you, your), wèi (classifier for people)”, and so on. The second category is written style or elegant wording which is used to stand out from informal verbal language to show respect. Commonly used terms include “fùqin

(father), mǔqin (mother), fūren (madam/wife), tàitai (madam/wife), bǎozhòng (take care)”, and so on. The third category are humble words which are meant to elevate the status of others through behaving in a humble or even self-deprecating manner. This practice reflects the principle of being modest. Commonly used terms include “nǎli nǎli (by no means), guòjiǎng (I’m flattered), bù gǎn dāng (you flatter me)”, and so on. You will come across as formal and polite if you use any of the above categories of expressions, in particular the first and the second categories.

In addition, you may use “yìdiǎnr (a bit)” and “yǒu diǎnr (is a little)” to lessen the intensity and soften the tone in order to sound friendly and self-effacing.

说得有礼

中国文化中的礼仪观念反映在语言上，就会出现很多礼貌性的词语和表达法。具体表现为：一是敬辞，用敬辞来指称对方，体现了尊敬他人的礼仪原则，常用的如“请、您、贵、位”等；二是书面语或雅词。用这种方式来区别开较不正式的口语，以表示尊敬，常用的如“父亲、母亲、夫人、太太、保重”等；三是谦辞，用谦虚甚至贬低自己的方式来提升对方，体现了自卑的礼仪原则，常用的如“哪里哪里、过奖、不敢当”等。说话时用了以上任一方式，尤其是第一或第二种，都可以显得正式而有礼貌。

此外，还可以用“一点儿”和“有点儿”来弱化程度和语气，从而显得友好、低调。

01 How to ask for someone's name

怎么问姓名

When Chinese people meet for the first time, generally they won't ask for the full name. One reason for this is that it may be presumptuous to do so, the other is that it is improper to address a person by their full name or given name even if you know it. People, therefore, generally just ask for the surname when meeting for the first time, as it is very convenient to address people by "surname + title" if you are already aware of his/her position, occupation or academic title.



初次见面时中国人常常不问对方的全名，一个原因是问全名可能显得冒昧，再一个原因就是即便知道了全名，也不太可能用全名或名字来称呼对方，所以一般只问姓。再知道对方的职位、职业或者学位等头衔后，用“姓+头衔”来称呼就显得礼貌得体了。

Nǐ xìng shénme ?
你姓 什么？

★★ *What is your family name?*

Qǐngwèn , Nǐ jiào shénme míngzi ?
请问，你叫什么名字？

★★★ *Excuse me, what is your name?*

Nín guìxìng ?
您贵姓？

★★★★ *What is your surname please?*

Qǐngwèn , nín guìxìng ?
请问，您贵姓？

★★★★★ *Excuse me, what is your surname?*

Qǐngwèn , zěnmē chēnghu nín ?
请问，怎么称呼您？

★★★★★ *Excuse me, how may I address you?*

Nǐ de míngzi shì shénme ?
● 你的名字是什么？

What is your name?

02 How to address someone you first meet

怎么称呼初次见面的人

When things are not called by their proper names, one's argument cannot stand to reason. Forms of address reflect the various relationships between people, so appropriate forms of address play a very important role in the interaction amongst Chinese people, while inappropriate forms of address may hinder further communication. Generally, the most common and polite way to address a person is to use "surname + title". Note that "title" here usually refers to official title, position, profession or academic title, instead of honorifics such as "Mr, Miss or Ms".

Do note that the Chinese will not address someone by his/her "surname" alone. It is also rare for the Chinese to address someone by his/her full name when they first meet, especially on formal social occasions, as it seems unfriendly and impolite. It is also inappropriate to address someone you just met by his/her given name, unless you are older or your status is higher, and you are trying to establish a closer relationship with him/her.

名不正则言不顺。称谓体现了人们之间的远近、亲疏、位次和隶属等关系，正确、得体的称谓在中国人的交往中起着非常重要的作用，不恰当的称呼可能会直接影响到双方进一步的交往。一般情况下，最常用、礼貌的称呼方法是“姓+头衔”。注意这里的“头衔”一般是指官衔、职务、职业、学位等，而不是“先生、小姐、女士”。

请注意，中国人不单独用“姓”来称呼对方，初次见面时以全名来称呼也是少见的，尤其是正式



的社交场合，因为这显得既不友好，也没有礼貌。刚认识时也不适合用“名”来称呼，除非称呼者比被称呼者年长或职位高一些，而且想用这种方式来拉近彼此间的距离。

Lǐ lǎoshī
李 老师

★★★ *Teacher Li*

Chén huìzhǎng
陈 会 长

★★★ *President Chen (of an association/society/
council)*

Wáng júzhǎng
王 局 长

★★★ *Director-General Wang*

Liú jīnglǐ
刘 经 理

★★★ *Manager Liu*

Mǎ yīshēng
马 医 生

★★★ *Doctor Ma*

Wú bóshì
吴 博 士

★★★ *Dr. Wu (Ph.D. or doctorate)*

Wáng zǒng
王 总

★★★ *General Manager Wang*

Hú xiānsheng
胡 先生

★★★ *Mr Hu*

Gāo xiǎojiě
高 小姐

★★★ *Miss Gao*

Lín nǚshì
林 女士

★★★★ *Ms Lin*

● Lǐ
李

Li (surname)

● Huá
华

Hua (given name)

● Lǐ Huá
李 华

Li Hua (full name)

03 How to address someone you know well

怎么称呼熟悉的人

For friends whom you know well, you can usually address them by their given names only. However, people with one-syllable given names, regardless of their gender, should not be addressed by their given names, as it sounds too intimate. For people whom you are familiar with, you can address them by their full names, provided that they are similar in age and status as you. Otherwise it may still sound a bit offensive to them.

You can also address people by adding the prefixes “lǎo (old)” (mainly used on males) or “xiǎo (little)” before one’s surname based on the difference in age between you and them. You can use “lǎo + surname” to address a middle-aged or elderly people of your age. You can use “xiǎo + surname” for someone who is obviously younger than you.

熟悉的朋友之间互相称呼，常常只叫名，不叫姓。但是要注意，对单名的人——无论是对同性还是异性，都不宜这么叫，因为这样称呼会显得过于亲昵。