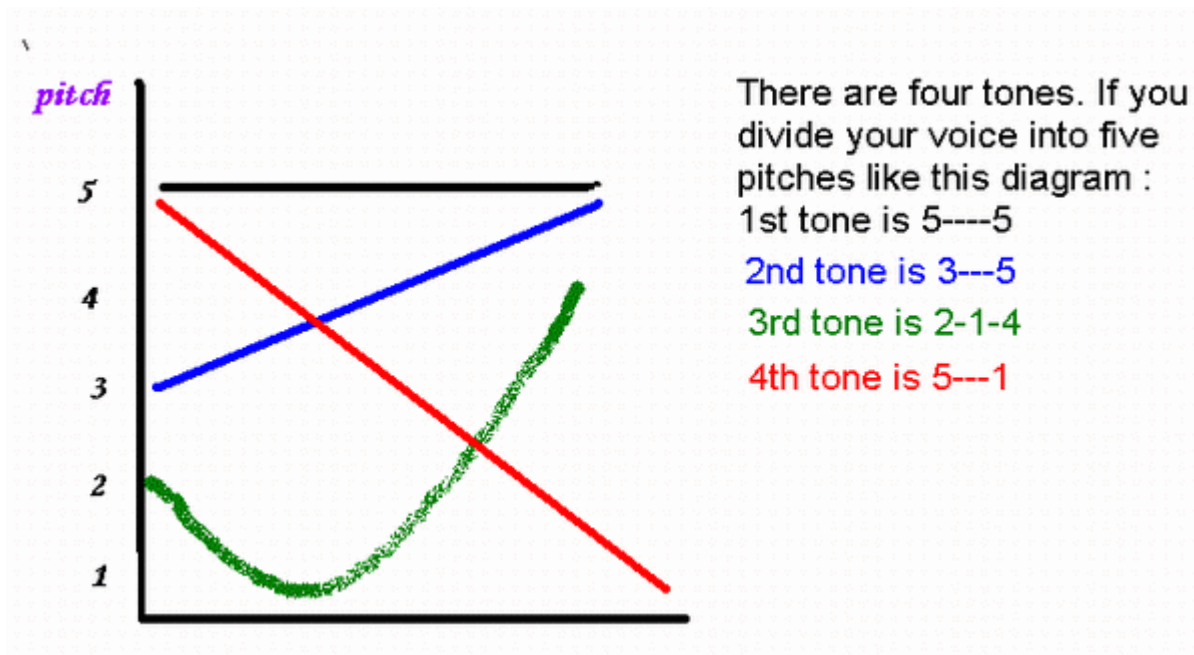


## Level: Elementary

### Lesson 4 Pronunciation Part 4

#### 4 tones :

We have learnt all the pinyin so far. Now we're heading for the most tricky part ---- the tones! As you have heard, there are four tones plus a neutral tone in Chinese, namely mā má mǎ mà and ma. Now let's view a diagram to see how the tones work.



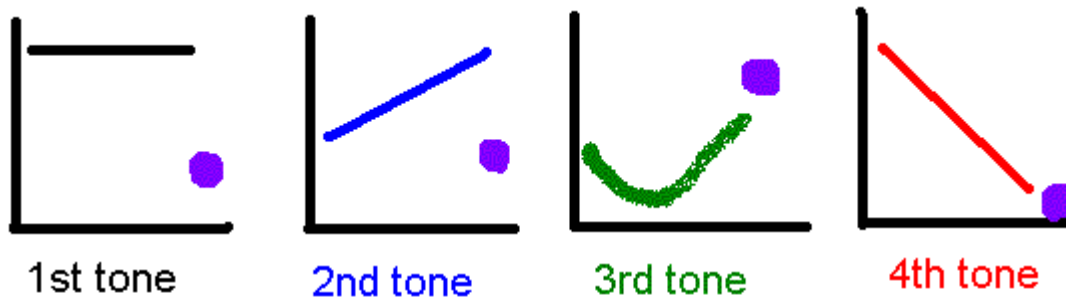
You probably notice that the tone markers are just miniatures of the tone lines illustrated in this diagram !Keeping this in mind makes it easier for you to recognize the tones Let's practice with bai.

bāi	break off things with finger or hands	掰
bái	white	白
bǎi	hundred	百
bài	worship	拜

You could use the same pattern to practise on each character to feel the tones. First single characters, then two character words with different tones. It's not easy to pronounce the tones in a correct way when they're combined together. The only way to improve it is to listen and imitate. To become tone-sensitive, you have to make effort and it does take a long time. So don't be frustrated if you can't do it perfectly yet !

## Neutral tones :

Neutral tones are pronounced lightly and shortly, without obvious tone. But they certainly possess some pitches when spelt with different tones preceding it. Let's see the diagrams again.



The purple dot is the neutral tone. When it's pronounced with the 1st tone and the 2nd tone, it's low, at around the pitch 2. When it's pronounced with the 3rd tone, it goes up to pitch 5. When it's pronounced with 4th tone, it's very low, at around the pitch 1.

māma	mom	妈妈
zhuōzi	table, desk	桌子
tāmen	they	他们
háizi	child	孩子
érzi	son	儿子
míngzi	name	名字
hǎoba	ok	好吧
nǐ de	your	你的
nǐmen	you ( plural form )	你们
bàba	dad	爸爸
xièxie	thank	谢谢
kuàizi	chopsticks	筷子

## Digging Deeper

To write correct pinyin, here are some additional rules :

- 1 Always put the tone marker on the major vowel. For instance, in “duō”, since “o” is more stressed than “u”, the tone marker should be put on “o”.
- 2 The tone marker is always on the second in “ui “ and “iu “. For instance, “huì “ and “duì”.
- 3 When writing tone marker on the “i”, the little dot is omitted, such as “mǐ” .
- 4 A comma is introduced to separate the final and the following syllable beginning with the vowels “a , o , e”. For instance, “ pí ’ āo ”, “xī ’ ān ” .
- 5 Some words with “er” sound could be pronounced together so they become one syllable.

wán er	wánr	play	玩儿
zhào piān er	zhào piānr	photo	照片儿
yì diǎn er	yì diǎnr	a little bit	一点儿