Chinese Is NOT as Difficult as You Imagine!

“… the only thing we have to fear is fear itself…”
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933)

The biggest impediment to learning Mandarin seems to be fear, as it is assumed by many people that Chinese is a very difficult language. It is true that a beginner of Mandarin Chinese who has no previous background in any Asian (particularly East Asian) language and culture may find Chinese so foreign, because the language employs tones combined with syllables to differentiate meanings in speech and uses a character-based writing system, which is distinctively different from alphabet-based languages like French and Spanish. However, after you have just entered the wonderful world of Chinese and received some proper guidance, you will find that Chinese really is NOT that difficult to learn. In fact, in many respects, Chinese, when compared with Indo-European languages like French, German, Italian, and Spanish, is much easier to learn.

• Unlike French or Spanish, nouns in Chinese have no grammatical gender.
• Unlike French or Spanish, nouns and adjectives in Chinese do not require agreement in gender and number.
• Unlike French or Spanish, there is no subject-verb agreement in Chinese.
• Unlike French or Spanish, there are no irregular verbs in Chinese and, as a result, there are no conjugations in the language.
• Chinese is easy to learn for English speakers because it has similar grammatical structures to English.
• Chinese is a very logical language. For example, while English has completely different names for the 12 months, Chinese uses the word for “month” plus the expressions for the numbers from 1 to 12 to convey the same concepts.
Why Chinese?

- China has been the fastest growing major nation for the past 30 years with an average annual GDP growth rate above 10%.
- China's economy is the second largest in the world after the U.S., when measured on a purchasing power parity (PPP) basis.
- China is now the U.S.'s No. 2 trading partner, behind Canada and ahead of Mexico, while the U.S. is China's No.1 trading partner.
- Whether it's trade, global warming, or resolution of area conflicts, China has begun to play an important role, without which no durable solution is possible.
- In many Asian countries, in Europe, and in the U.S., Mandarin has emerged as the new must-have language.
- Just as knowing English proved a key to getting ahead in the 20th century, learning Chinese will provide an edge in the 21st.
- As an official language of the United Nations, Chinese is a developed language with a long history, and one spoken by a population that is larger than those speaking any other language.
- Expertise in Chinese and Chinese studies prepares students for international careers in scholarship, diplomacy, banking, business, law, education, journalism, public health, medicine, and other China-related fields.
- As the most enduring world civilization, China has a major international cultural presence (e.g., in philosophy, religion, literature, music, dance, art, film, and cuisine), drawing on its tremendous heritage to enrich our present.

China is on the rise, and so is the Chinese language. With the rapid development of China's economy and ever-expanding international exchange and cooperation, the need for personnel with knowledge of Chinese becomes more and more urgent in many countries throughout the world, particularly in the U.S., where Chinese is classified as a “critical language.”

So, learn Chinese, get to know the rich Chinese culture, get a competitive edge in this increasingly competitive world, and be better prepared for challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.

Chinese Language Courses at CSI

**CHN 113 Basic Mandarin Chinese I**
4 hours; 4 credits
A beginning course in the fundamentals of Mandarin Chinese. The course will teach Pinyin, the standard pronunciation system, daily-life vocabulary, and basic sentence structures through real-life situations. The course will focus on developing basic skills and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing Mandarin Chinese, using a computer-assisted approach. Prerequisite: CHN 114 or equivalent

**CHN 114 Basic Mandarin Chinese II**
4 hours; 4 credits
This is the second semester of the beginning Chinese course. The course will review the Pinyin pronunciation system, build up daily-life vocabulary, and teach basic sentence structures through real-life situations. The course will continue to focus on developing basic skills and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing Mandarin Chinese, using a computer-assisted approach. Prerequisite: CHN 113 or equivalent

**CHN 213 Continuing Mandarin Chinese I**
4 hours; 4 credits
This course is for those students who have successfully completed the second semester of Basic Mandarin Chinese or who have been placed into this intermediate level. Using computer-assisted technology, the course will further develop skills and proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in Mandarin Chinese. Prerequisite: CHN 114 or equivalent

China- and Chinese-related Resources at CSI

Modern Language Media Center
(Building 25, Room 114; www.ml.csi.cuny.edu/lab)

The Modern Language Media Center of the Department of Modern Languages is a state-of-the-art facility designed to supplement class instruction of different languages. As far as Chinese is concerned, the Center offers tutoring and has a wide variety of materials in various media (videos, CDs, audio tapes, etc.) to help students with the learning of the language.

Modern China Studies Certificate Program
(www.library.csi.cuny.edu/modernchina/group.htm)

The Modern China Studies Group at CSI consists of faculty from numerous academic departments of the College and offers courses in various fields, including language, history, political science, cinema, and literature.

The Certificate Program in Modern China Studies offers students from different majors an opportunity to study Modern China in an interdisciplinary fashion. Four courses (16 credits) are required for the certificate, including one course in Chinese language and one core course (HST 213 Chinese Civilization). Students may use two courses (one in language) from the CUNY programs in China to fulfill the requirements.

Center for International Service and CUNY China Programs (www.csi.cuny.edu/international/china.html)

On behalf of The City University of New York (CUNY), the College of Staten Island's Center for International Service administers CUNY China programs. Among them are:
- CUNY Nanjing University Study Abroad Program (semester and year), offering courses in Chinese language, culture, society, history, literature, geography, and political system.
- CUNY Shanghai University Study Abroad Program (summer and winter sessions), offering courses in Chinese language and business.
- CSI City University of Hong Kong (CityU) Exchange Program (semester and year), offering courses in Chinese, translation and linguistics, international studies, East and Southeast Asian Studies, communication, public administration, criminology, psychology, and applied sociology.