

A-Z FOR

MANDARIN

AB INITIO

ESSENTIAL VOCABULARY ORGANIZED BY TOPIC FOR IB DIPLOMA

Mandarin Ab Initio

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Studying Mandarin Ab Initio at IB Diploma

The IB Mandarin Ab Initio course is a rigorous and rewarding language acquisition programme designed to help you develop your communication skills and deepen your intercultural understanding. As a beginner of Mandarin, you will gradually build confidence in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, while exploring key aspects of Chinese culture and daily life.

How this resource can support your learning

Studying Mandarin Ab Initio requires regular independent learning, especially when acquiring new vocabulary, understanding sentence structures, and practising tones and pronunciation. Your teacher and classmates are valuable sources of support, but they may not always be available when you need quick access to language for different themes and tasks.

This book aims to support you by providing a clear and accessible core of vocabulary and language, organized according to the themes and topics of the IB Diploma Mandarin Ab Initio course.

- The five themes (Sections 1–5 in this book) are divided into topics and sub-topics. Each sub-topic includes:
 - **individual words**, including **verbs and common verb–object combinations**, presented with **pinyin**, to support accurate pronunciation, along with their part(s) of speech (noun, noun phrase, verb, verb phrase, adjective, adverb, preposition) to help you use them correctly
 - **basic sentences** that you will encounter early in your studies
 - **more sophisticated sentences** that model useful structures such as aspect markers, sentence patterns, connectors, or topic–comment structures. These sentences highlight specific linguistic features in **bold**. Their English equivalents are also shown in **bold** to help you identify how the structure works across both languages.
- **More advanced words and phrases** are marked with an asterisk (*).
- Each topic features key idioms and cultural concepts, giving you the tools to add depth to your exam responses.
- Section 6 provides general and idiomatic language not tied to a specific theme (e.g. time expressions, measure words, useful connectors). It also includes guidance for preparing your Individual Oral assessment, with phrases for describing an image and responding to follow-up questions.
- Mandarin has unique features such as tones, measure words, and character forms. While this resource focuses on vocabulary and sentence patterns, you are encouraged to practise pronunciation regularly and to build familiarity with characters at your own pace.
- This book is not an exhaustive list of all vocabulary you may encounter. You are encouraged to expand your personal vocabulary through classwork, reading, and your teacher's recommendations. You may wish to add your own notes to personalize this resource.
- This book uses simplified Chinese characters.

We wish you every success in your Mandarin learning journey and in your IB Diploma exams.

Ziv and the Elemi team

shēnfèn rèntóng 1 身份认同 Identities

gèrén tèdiǎn A 个人特点 Personal attributes

gèrén zīliào 个人资料

míngzì
名字 (n)

jiào
叫 (v)

xìng
姓 (n/v)

xìngmíng
姓名 (n)

niánlíng
年龄 (n)

sù
岁 (n)

chūshēng rìqī
出生日期 (n)

guójí
国籍 (n)

xìngbié
性别 (n)

dìzhǐ
地址 (n)

zhíyè
职业 (n)

diànhuà hàomǎ
电话号码 (n)

Wǒ de míngzì jiào Lǐ Míng.
我的名字叫李明。

Wǒ jīnnián shíwǔ suì, shì Yīngguó rén, zhù zài Lúndūn.
我今年十五岁，是英国人，住在伦敦。

wàimào 外貌

gāo/ǎi
高 / 矮 (adj)

pàng/shòu
胖 / 瘦 (adj)

dà/xiǎo
大 / 小 (adj)

cháng/duǎn
长 / 短 (adj)

yuán
圆 (adj)

Personal details

name

to be called

surname/to be surnamed

full name

age

year (or years old)

date of birth

nationality

gender

address

occupation

phone number

My name is (called) Li Ming.

I am 15 years old, I am British, and I live in London.

Physical appearance

tall/short [height]

fat/slim

big/small

long/short [length]

round

piàoliang/hǎokàn

漂亮 / 好看 (adj)

Tā yǒu chángcháng de tóufa hé yuán yuán de liǎn.

她有长长的头发和圆圆的脸。

Tā hěn gāo, yǎnjīng hěn dà.

他很高，眼睛很大。

Wǒ de tuǐ bǐ tā de duǎn.

我的腿比她的短。

xìnggé

性格

wàixiàng

外向 (adj)

nèixiàng

内向 (adj)

yǒuhǎo

友好 (adj)

yǒu nàixīn

有耐心 (adj phrase)

zìxìn

自信 (adj)

lèguān

乐观 (adj)

yúkuài

愉快 (adj)

kāilǎng

开朗 (adj)

hàixiū

害羞 (adj)

mǎhu

马虎 (adj)

gùzhí

固执 (adj)

chéngshí

诚实 (adj)

lǐmào

礼貌 (n/adj)

tǐtiē

体贴 (adj)

tónglǐ xīn

同理心 (n)

Wǒmen de xìnggé bùtóng, dàn dōu néng héping xiāngchǔ.

我们的性格不同，但都能和平相处。

Yǒu tónglǐxīn de rén huì bāngzhù biérén, yě huì guānxīn biérén de gǎnshòu.

有同理心的人会帮助别人，也会关心别人的感受。

pretty/good-looking

She has long hair and a round face.

He is tall and has big eyes.

My legs **are shorter than hers.**

Personality

outgoing

introverted

friendly

patient

confident

optimistic

happy (or cheerful)

cheerful

shy

careless

stubborn

honest

politeness/polite

considerate

empathy

We have different personalities, **but** we all get along well.

A person with empathy helps others and cares about their feelings.

jiéqìng
D 节庆 Festivals and celebrations

xísú yǔ chuántǒng
习俗与传统

tuányuán

团圆 (v/n)

lǐyí

礼仪 (n)

kèqì

客气 (adj)

lǐmào

礼貌 (n)

wénhuà xíguàn

文化习惯 (np)

jìnglǎo

敬老 (v)

xiàoshùn

孝顺 (adj/n)

héxié

和谐 (adj/n)

sònglǐ

送礼 (v)

shōulǐ

收礼 (v)

jiāting guānniàn

* 家庭观念 (n)

jìniàn

* 纪念 (v/n)

Zài Zhōngguó, zūnzhòng zhǎngbèi shì hěn zhòngyào de
jiāting chuántǒng.

在中国，尊重长辈是很重要的家庭传统。

chūnjié/nónglì xīnnián

春节 / 农历新年

fàng biānpào

放鞭炮 (v)

tiē chūnlián

贴春联 (v)

pài/shōu hóngbāo

派 / 收红包 (v)

bàinián

拜年 (v)

tuánnián fàn

团年夜饭 (n)

Chūnjié cóng nónglì zhēngyuè chūyī dào shíwǔ, suǒyǐ

Zhōngguó de xīnnián gòng yǒu shíwǔ tiān.

春节从农历正月初一到十五，所以中国的
新年共有十五天。

Customs and traditions

to reunite/reunion

ritual/etiquette

polite/modest

politeness

cultural habit

to show respect to the elderly

filial piety

harmony

to give a gift

to receive a gift

family value

to commemorate

In China, respecting elders is an important family
tradition.

Spring Festival/Chinese New Year

to set off firecrackers [a custom to drive away evil
spirits and welcome the new year]

to put up Spring Festival couplets [red scrolls with
auspicious phrases for good luck]

to give/receive red envelopes

to pay a New Year visit [to relatives and friends,
and greet them with auspicious phrases]

reunion dinner [a family meal on New Year's Eve
symbolizing unity and togetherness]

The Spring Festival lasts from the 1st to the 15th
day of the first lunar month, so Chinese New Year
has 15 days in total.

Guò nián **de shíhòu**, lǎorén huì pài hóngbāo gěi háizi.
过年的时候，老人会派红包给孩子。

Chūnjié **qián**, jiājiā hùhù dōu huì zài ménkǒu tiē chūnlián.
春节前，家家户户都会在门口贴春联。

qīngmíng jié
清明节

sǎo mù
扫墓 (v)

Qīngmíng jié zài měi nián **xili** 4 yuè 4 rì huò 5 rì, zhè shì jìzǔ hé sǎomù de rìzi.

清明节在每年**西历** 4 月 4 日或 5 日，这是祭祖和扫墓的日子。

duānwǔ jié
端午节

zongzi
粽子 (n)

sài lóngzhōu
赛龙舟 (v)

Duānwǔ jié zài nónglì wǔyuè chūwǔ, **dàgài** zài xili 5 yuè mò huò 6 yuè chū.

端午节在农历五月初五，**大概**在西历 5 月末或 6 月初。

zhōngqiū jié
中秋节

yuèbǐng
月饼 (n)

shǎng yuè
赏月 (v)

wán dēnglong
玩灯笼 (v)

Zhōngqiū jié de wǎnshang, dàjiā huì yìqǐ shǎng yuè.
中秋节的晚上，大家会一起赏月。

Zhōngqiū jié zài nónglì bāyuè shíwǔ, **dàgài** zài xili 9 yuè huò 10 yuè.

中秋节在农历八月十五，**大概**在西历 9 月或 10 月。

During New Year, elders give red envelopes to children.

Before Spring Festival, every household puts couplets up on their door.

Qingming Festival/Tomb-Sweeping Day

to tomb-sweep [to clean graves and pay respect to one's ancestors]

The Qingming Festival falls on 4/5 April in the **Gregorian calendar**, and it is a day for ancestor worship and tomb sweeping.

Dragon Boat Festival
[commemorates the poet Qu Yuan, celebrated with dragon boat races and eating *zongzi*]

zongzi [rice dumpling]

dragon boat racing [symbolizing teamwork and remembrance of Qu Yuan]

The Dragon Boat Festival is on the 5th day of the 5th lunar month, **usually** in late May or early June in the Gregorian calendar.

Mid-Autumn Festival
[celebrates the full moon with a family reunion]

mooncake [a pastry symbolizing reunion and shared blessings]

to appreciate the moon

to play with lanterns [Children carry or play with lanterns, adding joy to the festival.]

On the night of the Mid-Autumn Festival, people admire the full moon together.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month, **usually** in September or October in the Gregorian calendar.

shèhuì zǔzhī
4 社会组织 Social organization

línǚ
A 邻里 Neighbourhood

dìdiǎn

地点

xuéxiào

学校 (n)

túshūguǎn

图书馆 (n)

bówùguǎn

博物馆 (n)

yīyuàn

医院 (n)

zhěnsuǒ

诊所 (n)

tīyùguǎn

体育馆 (n)

chāoji shìchǎng/chāoshì

超级市场 / 超市 (n)

yínháng

银行 (n)

yóujú

邮局 (n)

cānguǎn

餐馆 (n)

gōngyuán

公园 (n)

guǎngchǎng

广场 (n)

shèqū zhōngxīn

社区中心 (n)

yóuyǒngchí

游泳池 (n)

tíngchēchǎng

停车场 (n)

fāngbiàn

方便 (adj)

ānquán

安全 (adj)

shèqū guīhuà

社区规划 (n)

gōnggòng zīyuán

公共资源 (n)

wúzhàng' ài shèshī

* 无障碍设施 (n)

Places

school

library

museum

hospital

clinic

sports centre (or gym)

supermarket

bank

post office

restaurant

park

public square

community centre

swimming pool

parking lot

convenient

safe

community planning

public resource

accessible facility



lǜhuà kōngjiān

* 绿化空间 (n)

Wǒ chángcháng qù túshūguǎn xuéxí, **yīnwèi** nàlǐ hěn ānjìng.
我常常去图书馆学习, **因为**那里很安静。

Shèqū zhōngxīn **měi zhōu dōu** huì jǔbàn bùtóng de huódòng.
社区中心**每周都会**举办不同的活动。

Chāoshì de dōngxī hěn qíquán, mǎi **riyòngpǐn** fēicháng fāngbiàn.
超市的东西很齐全, 买**日用品**非常方便。

Shèqū guīhuà **de mùbiāo** shì ràng jūmín shēnghuó de gèng fāngbiàn, gèng ānquán.
社区规划**的目标**是让居民生活得更方便、更安全。

Gōnggòng zīyuán yīnggāi gōngpíng fēnpèi, ràng **měi gè rén dōu yǒu** jīhuì shǐyòng.
公共资源应该公平分配, 让**每个人都有**机会使用。

wǒ de jiā

我的家

gōngyù

公寓 (n)

fángzi

房子 (n)

gāolóu

高楼 (n)

kètīng

客厅 (n)

fàntīng

饭厅 (n)

chúfáng

厨房 (n)

wòshì

卧室 (n)

cèsuǒ

厕所 (n)

yùshì

浴室 (n)

shūfáng

书房 (n)

huāyuán

花园 (n)

chēkù

车库 (n)

chuáng

床 (n)

zhuōzi

桌子 (n)

green space

I often go to the library to study **because** it is very quiet there.

The community centre holds different activities **every week**.

The supermarket has everything, so buying **daily necessities** is very convenient.

The goal of community planning is to make residents' lives more convenient and safer.

Public resources should be distributed fairly so **everyone has** the chance to use them.

My home

flat (or apartment)

house

high-rise building

living room

dining room

kitchen

bedroom

toilet

bathroom

study

garden

garage

bed

table (or desk)

chángyòng cíyǔ

6 常用词语 Useful language

yībān chángyòng cíyǔ

A 一般常用词语 Commonly used language

jīběn jièshào yǔyán

基本介绍语言

Nǐ hǎo!/Nín hǎo!

你好! / 您好!

Wǒ láizì Měiguó de Yīndì'ānnà.

我来自美国的印第安纳。

Wǒ shì yí gè zhōngxué shí'èr niánjí de xuéshēng.

我是一个中学十二年级的学生。

Wǒ xuéxí Hànyǔ liǎng nián le.

我学习汉语两年了。

Wǒ fēicháng xǐhuān Zhōngguó wénhuà.

我非常喜欢中国文化。

Wǒ bù xǐhuān lājī shíwù.

我不喜欢垃圾食物。

Wǒ de jiā yǒu sì kǒu rén.

我的家有四口人。

Wǒ xiànzài zhù zài Xiānggǎng.

我现在住在香港。

Wǒ zǎoshang chī le zǎofàn.

我早上吃了早饭。

Wǒ zhèngzài chī língshí.

我正在吃零食。

Wǒ wǎnshàng huì chī yú.

我晚上会吃鱼。

Wǒ huì shuō liúlì de Yīngwén.

我会说流利的英文。

Wǒ cóng jiā zǒu dào gōngyuán yào shí fēnzhōng.

我从家走到公园要十分钟。

Wǒ xiǎng qù Táiwān lǚxíng.

我想去台湾旅行。

wèntí yǔ

问题语

Nǐ zài chī shénme?

你在吃什么?

Nǐ wèishénme xǐhuān Zhōngguó cài?

你为什么喜欢中国菜?

Nǐ zhù zài nǎlǐ?

你住在哪里?

Nǐ xǐhuān nǎge jiérì?

你喜欢哪个节日?

Basic introduction language

Hello! [informal, used with friends or peers]/Hello!

[formal, used with teachers or elders]

I come from Indiana, USA.

I am a 12th grade high school student.

I have been studying Mandarin for two years.

I like Chinese culture very much.

I don't like junk food.

There are four people in my family.

I currently live in Hong Kong.

I ate breakfast this morning.

[了 = action already finished]

I am eating a snack.

[正在 = action in progress]

I will eat fish in the evening.

[会 = action in the future]

I can speak fluent English.

[会 = to be able to do an action]

It takes ten minutes to walk from my home to the park. [从……到…… can be used for locations and times]

I want to travel to Taiwan.

Question words

What are you eating?

Why do you like Chinese food?

Where do you live?

Which festival do you like?

kǒuyǔ chángyòng yǔyán
C 口语常用语言 Useful language for the speaking exam

gèrén yǎnjiǎng
个人演讲

Zhè zhāng zhàopiàn shì guānyú.....
这张照片是关于……。

Wǒ kàn dào.....
我看到……。

Zhàopiàn shàng yǒu jǐ gè rén.
照片上有几个人。

Tāmen zhèngzài.....
他们正在……。

Tāmen kàn qǐlái hěn.....
他们看起来很……。

Zhàopiàn de.....yǒu.....
照片的……有……。

shàngmiàn/xiàmiàn/qiánmiàn/hòumiàn/zuǒmiàn/yòumiàn
上面 / 下面 / 前面 / 后面 / 左面 / 右面 (n)

pángbiān/duìmiàn
旁边 / 对面 (n)

Zhè zhāng zhàopiàn kěnéng shì zài.....pāi de.
这张照片可能是在……拍的。

Zhè zhāng zhàopiàn hěn yǒuyìsi.
这张照片很有意思。

Wǒ juéde.....
我觉得……。

Zhè ràng wǒ xiǎngdào Zhōngguó wénhuà.
这让我想到中国文化。

Zhè shì wǒ de yǎnjiǎng, xièxiè.
这是我的演讲，谢谢。

yǎnjiǎng wèntí/yìbān tāolùn
演讲问题 / 一般讨论

Nǐ juéde tāmen zài nǎlǐ?
你觉得他们在哪里？

Tāmen zài zuò shénme?
他们在做什么？

Tāmen zài chī shénme?
他们在吃什么？

Tāmen chuān shénme yīfu?
他们穿什么衣服？

Nǐ juéde tāmen kāixīn ma?
你觉得他们开心吗？

Nǐ xǐhuān.....ma?
你喜欢……吗？

Nǐ de guójiā yě yǒu zhèyàng de huódòng ma?
你的国家也有这样的活动吗？

Speech

This photo is about...

I can see...

There are several people in the photo.

They are currently... [doing something]

They look very...

At/On the ... of the photo, there is/are...

top/bottom/front/back/left side/right side

beside (or next to)/opposite side (or opposite)

This photo was probably taken in...

This photo is very interesting.

I think...

This reminds me of Chinese culture.

This is my presentation, thank you.

Follow-up questions/general conversation

Where do you think they are?

What are they doing?

What are they eating?

What are they wearing?

Do you think they're happy?

Do you like...?

Is there a similar activity in your country?