



Absolute Beginner S1

Shooting the Breeze in Cantonese

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Traditional Chinese

你最近點啊？
幾好，你呢？
幾好。

Jyutping

nei5 zeoi3 gan6 dim2 aa3 ?
gei2 hou2 , nei5 ne1 ?
gei2 hou2。

English

How are you lately?
Pretty good. And you?
Not bad.

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Vocabulary

Traditional	Jyutping	English
你	nei5	you
最近	zeoi3 gan6	lately
點啊	dim2 aa1	What's up?
幾好	gei2 hou2	pretty good
啊	aa1	ahhh
好好	hou2 hou2	very good
燒賣	siu1 maai2	pork and mushroom dumplings

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

你最近點啊？
我最近幾好。
呢排點啊？

nei5 zeoi3 gan6 dim2 aa3 ?
ngo5 zeoi3 gan6 gei2 hou2。
ni1 paai4 dim2 aa3 ?

How have you been lately?
I've been all right lately.
How are you doing lately?

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我覺得佢幾好。

ngo5 gok3 dak1 keoi5 gei2
hou2。

I think he is pretty good.

呢排點啊？

ni1 paai4 dim2 aa3 ?

How are you doing lately?

我好好。

ngo5 hou2 hou2。

I'm very good/well.

我要兩籠燒賣。

ngo5 jiu3 loeng5 lung4 siu1
maai2。

I want two baskets of pork and
mushroom dumplings.

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Asking, "How have you been?"

你最近點啊？

nei5 zeoi3 gan6 dim2 aa3?

"How are you lately?"

When asking a question in Cantonese, you place the question in statement form. For example, "How are you?" turns into "You are how," as a statement: 你點啊？(nei5 dim2 aa3?) - "How are you?" To sound more colloquial and informal, add an 啊 (aa3) at the end of the sentence.

In the dialogue, we saw the sentence 你最近點啊？(nei5 zeoi3 gan6 dim2 aa3?) - "How have you been lately?" In Cantonese, the adverb 最近 (zeoi3 gan6) - "lately" comes right after the subject. So it is "you lately how," plus 啊. Also, native speakers usually say it without the 你, that is, 最近點啊 or 點啊.

If someone asks you this question, 你最近點啊？ you can reply with 我最近幾好啊 (ngo5 zeoi3 gan6 gei2 hou2 aa1.) - "I've been good lately." Notice that the adverb 最近 is in the same position here after the subject 我.

Cultural Insight

Exchanging Pleasantries

Exchanging pleasantries and engaging in small talk is a big part of the Cantonese speaking culture. There are a few ways to be friendly with old friends or casual acquaintances.

Some examples of "small talk" include:

1. 食左飯未？

sik6 zo2 faan6 mei6

"Have you eaten yet?"

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2. 最近點啊？

zeoi3 gan6 dim2 aa3

"How have you been lately?"

3. 點啊？

dim2 aa3

"What's up?"

Another way to engage in small talk is by asking someone if they have eaten, such as 得閒飲茶 (dak1 haan4 jam2 caa4.) - "Have Cantonese breakfast or brunch or dim sum when you have time." This doesn't necessarily mean an invitation to brunch together, but functions more as "I'll call you."