



Absolute Beginner S1

A Beer to Quench your Cantonese Thirst

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Traditional Chinese

小姐，唔該！
唔？
我要一支啤酒。
冇問題。

Jyutping

siu2 ze2 , m4 goi1 !
m2 ?
ngo5 jiu3 jat1 zi1 be1 zau2.
mou5 man6 tai4.

English

Excuse me, Miss?
Hmm?
I would like a beer.
No problem.

2

Vocabulary

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Traditional	Jyutping	English
小姐	siu2 ze2	miss
要	jiu1	to want / to need
一	jat1	one
支	zi1	(measure word for bottle)
啤酒	be1 zau2	beer
冇問題	mou5 man6 tai4	no problem
先生	sin1 saang1	sir, mister
靚仔	leng3 zai2	handsome boy
靚女	leng3 nei2	pretty girl
兩	loeng5	two (2)
個	go3	(measure word)
果汁	gwo2 zap1	juice
水	sei2	water

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

小姐，唔該借過。 我要兩個pizza。 一個人嚟？ 兩支生力啤幾錢？	siu2 ze2 , m4 goi1 ze3 gwo3。 ngo5 jiu3 loeng5 go3 pizza。 jat1 go3 jan4 lai4 ? loeng5 zi1 sang1 lik6 be1 gei2 cin2 ?	Miss, please let me through. I want two pizzas. You here alone? How much are two San Miguel's?
兩支生力啤幾錢？ 乜都有問題。 先生，幾位？ 偉仔好靚仔。	loeng5 zi1 sang1 lik6 be1 gei2 cin2 ? mat1 dou1 mou5 man6 tai4。 sin1 saang1 , gei2 wai2? wai5 zai2 hou2 leng3 zai2。	How much are two San Miguel's? Everything's no problem. How many people, sir? Tony Leung is very good-looking.
嘉玲好靚女。	gaa1 ling4 hou2 leng3 nei5。	Carling Lau is very good-looking.
兩位。 我有兩個姊妹。	loeng5 wai2。 ngo5 jau5 loeng5 go3 ze4 ze1。	For two. I have two older sisters.
兩杯果汁，唔該。	loeng5 bui1 gwo2 zap1 , m4 goi1。	Two glasses of juice, please.
水對身體好。	sei2 dei3 san1 tai2 hou2。	Water is good for the body.

Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson is Asking for Something

我要一支啤酒。

ngo5 jiu3 jat1 zi1 be1 zau2.

"I would like a beer."

The grammar focus of this lesson is the verb "to want" (要, jiu3). You can use this to express desire, interest, or a set plan for something that you want. The sentence structure for this verb follows the familiar pattern S+V+O where 要 is the verb, and what you want is the object.

For Example:

1. 小姐，我要百威。

siu2 ze2, ngo5 jiu3 baak3 wai1

"Miss, I want a Budweiser."

2. 香港啤酒好好飲。

hoeng1 gong2 be1 zau2 hou2 hou2 jam2

"Hong Kong beer tastes good."

3. 我要水。

ngo5 jiu3 sei2

"I want water."

4. 我要果汁。

ngo5 jiu3 gwo2 zap1

"I want fruit juice."

5. 我要兩個菜。

ngo5 jiu3 loeng5 go3 coi3

"I want two dishes."*

6. 我要兩個飯。

ngo5 jiu3 loeng5 go3 faan6

"I want two bowls of rice."*

* Remember that Cantonese uses measure words like 個 (go3) to distinguish the object. Remember that the measure word goes after the verb and before the object.

Cultural Insight

Calling Out in Cantonese

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When traveling through a street in either Hong Kong or Guangdong, many roadside vendors will yell out at you 喂, 靚仔! (wai2, leng3 zai2!) - "Hey gorgeous!" just to get your attention. Another common call is 靚女 (leng3 nei5), which literally translates to "woman wearing makeup." You might look back amusingly to see what all the commotion is about, but this kind of yelling out is just a Cantonese custom.