

LESSON NOTES

Beginner S1 #12

Asking for Directions in Cantonese

CONTENTS

- 2 Traditional Chinese
- 2 Jyutping
- 2 English
- 2 Vocabulary
- 3 Sample Sentences
- 4 Grammar
- 5 Cultural Insight

12

TRADITIONAL CHINESE

1. 邊度有銀行?
2. 前面直行，然後轉左。
3. 行幾耐?
4. 十分鐘到。

JYUTPING

1. Bin1 dou6 jau5 ngan4 hong4?
2. Cin4 min6 zik6 haang4, jin4 hau6 zyun3 zo2.
3. Haang4 gei2 noi6?
4. Sap6 fan1 zung1 dou2.

ENGLISH

1. Where is the bank?
2. Go straight, then turn left.
3. How long is the walk?
4. About ten minutes.

VOCABULARY

Traditional	Romanization	English	Class
直行	zik6 haang4	to go straight	verb
轉	zyun3	to turn	verb
前	cin4	front	noun
後	hau6	back	noun
左	zo2	left	noun
右	jau6	right	noun
然後	jin4 hau6	then; afterwards	adverb
邊度	bin1 dou6	where	pronoun
銀行	ngan4 hong4	bank	noun

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>向前直行大概一百米。 <i>Hoeng3 cin4 zik6 haang4 daai6 koi3 jat1 baak3 mai5 ,</i></p> <p>Walk straight for about one hundred meters.</p>	<p>當佢每次轉身，我都會心跳加速。 <i>dong1 keoi5 mui5 ci3 zyun3 san1 , ngo5 dou1 wui5 sam1 tiu3 gaa1 cuk1。</i></p> <p>Every time she turns around, my heart rate raises.</p>
<p>喺前面街口轉右。 <i>hai2 cin4 min6 gaai1 hau2 zyun3 jau6。</i></p> <p>Turn right at the next corner.</p>	<p>飯後唔好即刻運動。 <i>faan6 hau6 m4 hou2 zik1 hak1 wan6 dung6。</i></p> <p>Do not exercise directly after a meal.</p>
<p>就喺左邊。 <i>zau6 hai2 zo2 bin1。</i></p> <p>It's right on the left.</p>	<p>紅綠燈轉右。 <i>hung4 luk6 dang1 zyun3 jau6。</i></p> <p>Turn right at the stop light.</p>

我要默默咁努力，然後一鳴驚人!
ngo5 jiu3 mak6 mak6 gam2 nou5 lik6 , jin4 hau6
jat1 ming4 ging1 jan4 !

I want to work hard, then startle people!

去咗邊度?
heoi3 zo2 bin1 dou6?

Where did (you) go?

聽講呢間銀行尋日俾人打劫。
teng1 gong2 ni1 gaan1 ngan4 hong4 cam4 jat6 bei2 jan4 daa2 gip6.

I heard that this bank was robbed yesterday.

GRAMMAR

Giving Directions in Cantonese

前面直行，然後轉左。

"First go straight, then turn left."

Our grammar focus today is learning how to chain directions together in Cantonese. This involves using the words 首先 (sau2 sin1) for "first" and 然後 (jin4 hau6) for "then" and chaining them together in sequence. The exact pattern is identical to the way we use it in English, and as with English, there is no limit how to many instances of 然後 you can use in a sentence. Consider the following examples:

1. 首先去銀行，然後買飲品。
Sau2 sin1 heoi3 ngan4 hong4, jin4 hau6 maai5 jam2 ban2.
First go to the bank, then buy a drink.
2. 首先睇戲，然後飲嘢。
Sau2 sin1 tai2 hei3, jin4 hau6 jam2 je5.
First a movie, then a bar.
3. 首先直行，然後轉左。
Sau2 sin1 zik6 haang4, jin4 hau6 zyun3 zo2.
irst go straight, then turn left.

4. 首先轉左，然後轉右。

Sau2 sin1 zyun3 zo2, jin4 hau6 zyun3 jau6.

First turn left, then turn right.

5. 首先轉左，然後轉右，然後直行，然後再轉左。

Sau2 sin1 zyun3 zo2, jin4 hau6 zyun3 jau6, jin4 hau6 zik6 haang4, jin4 hau6 zoi3 zyun3 zo2.

First turn left, then turn right, then go straight, then turn left again.

If you're spending a lot of time in more casual situations, it's worth remembering that 首先 (sau2 sin1) is a relatively formal word, so in colloquial Cantonese speakers will often abbreviate it to 先 instead. A more casual way of saying the sentence in our dialogue would thus be 先轉左，然後轉右 *sin1 zyun3 zo2, jin4 hau6 zyun3 jau6* ("first turn left, then turn right"). Equally, a colloquial alternative to 然後 is the word 再 (*zoi3*), which means "again" or "later" as in the phrase 再見 *zoi3 gin3* ("goodbye" or "see you later"). This gives us three general patterns which are interchangeable:

1. 首先 ... 然後 ...
2. 先 ... 然後 ...
3. 先 / 首先 ... 再 ...

Language Tip

What if you have a final option? If you want to stress a final action which should be taken, add 最後 (*zeoi3 hau6*) to the end of your sentence, followed by the last piece of information.

CULTURAL INSIGHT

People in Hong Kong are really tremendously polite. So don't worry that much if you don't understand the directions someone gives you the first time around. What you should be concerned about is that if you don't understand after several efforts, you might have someone go out of their way to physically show you how to get somewhere, even going so far as to "force" you to follow their advice and take the minibus when you really want to take the subway.