



Beginner S1

The Hong Kong Music Scene

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Traditional Chinese

咦？你識彈吉他㗎？
少少喇。
你學咗幾耐啊？
三個月到。
彈得幾好喔。
多謝。

Jyutping

Ji2? Nei5 sik1 taan4 git6 taa1 gaa4?
Siu2 siu2 laa1.
Nei5 hok6 zo2 gei2 noi6 aa3 ?
Saam1 go3 jyut6 dou2.
Taan4 dak1 gei2 hou2 wo3.
Do1 ze6.

English

A Huh? You know how to play guitar?
B A bit.
A How long have you been learning?
B About three months.
A You play pretty well.
B Thanks.

Vocabulary

Traditional	Jyutping	English
彈	taan4	to play
吉他	git6 taa1	guitar
少少	siu2 siu2	a little
多謝	do1 ze6	thanks
學	hok6	to learn
到	dou2	about
幾耐	gei2 noi6	how long

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

我想學彈吉他！	Ngo5 soeng2 hok6 taan4 git6 taa1。	I want to learn to play guitar.
佢好中意彈吉他。	Keoi5 hou2 zung1 ji3 taan4 git6 taa1。	He likes playing guitar very much.
我識少少中文。	Ngo5 sik1 siu2 siu2 zung1 man2。	I know a bit of Chinese.
多謝誇獎！	Do1 ze6 kwaa1 zoeng2。	Thank you for the compliments!
多謝合作。	Do1 ze6 hap6 zok3。	Thank you for cooperating.
我學過跳舞。	ngo5 hok6 gwo3 tiu3 mou5。	I've learned dancing.
套戲兩個鐘頭到。	Tou3 hei3 loeng5 go3 zung1 tau4 dou2。	The film is about two hours.
我都唔記得用咗幾耐做完。	ngo5 dou1 ng4 gei3 dak1 jung6 zo2 gei2 noi6 zou6 jyun4。	I don't remember how long it took me to finish.
英文課上咗幾耐？	Jing1 man2 fo3 soeng5 zo2 gei2 noi6?	How long is the English class?

Grammar Points

Lengths of Time in Cantonese

三個月到。

"Around three months."

In earlier lessons we taught you the most useful nouns for talking about times and dates. The most useful of these words are 今日 gam1 jat6 ("today"), 聽日 ting1 jat6 ("tomorrow") and 尋日, cam4 jat6 ("yesterday"). But what if you want to describe how long it took you to do something rather than the date on which something happened?

In this lesson we learn exactly this: the rules for talking about specific lengths of time in Cantonese. The good news is that the language used to do this is very simple. The bad news is that the grammar is somewhat inconsistent. Sometimes Cantonese speakers will use a measure word in these expressions and sometimes they will omit one. Compare 三個星期 saam1 go3 sing1 kei4 ("three weeks") with 兩日 leong5 jat6 ("two days"), for

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instance. The former includes the measure word 個 between the number and the time noun, while the latter leaves it out.

Fortunately, Cantonese is consistent on this point. And the general rule is that you omit the measure word when talking about minutes, days or years. And you leave it in for everything else: hours, weeks, months or semesters. To review:

The following do not require a measure word:

分鐘 zung1 ("minute")
日 jat6 ("day")
年 nin4 ("year")

The following require the measure word 個 (go3):

鐘 zu1 ("hour")
星期 sing1 kei4 ("week")
月 jyut6 ("month")
學期 hok1 kei4 ("semester")

There is no good way to learn these rules other than memorization. That said, you should quickly internalize the rules just from exposure to daily conversation. For more examples, consider the following sample sentences:

1. 三個月
Saam1 go3 jyut6
"Three months"
2. 兩個星期
Leong5 go3 sing1 kei4
"Two weeks"
3. 六個月
Luk6 go3 jyut6
"Six months"
4. 四個星期
Sei3 go3 sing1 kei4
"Four weeks"
5. 五日
Ng5 jat6
"Five days"

Cultural Insight

A Pleasant Surprise

Hong Kong people are sweetly credulous when it comes to foreigners learning Cantonese. If anyone asks you 你學咗廣東話幾耐 ("How long have you studied Cantonese"), try answering 兩日 ("two days"). You'll be surprised how many people will believe you and be really impressed.