



Beginner S1

Hot in Hong Kong

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Traditional Chinese

靚女，你好索！
多謝。
可唔可以俾你電話號碼我？
唔可以。

Jyutping

Leng3 nei2, nei5 hou2 sok3!
Do1 ze6.
Ho2 m4 ho2 ji5 bei2 nei5 din6 waa2 hou4 maa5 ngo5?
M4 ho2 ji5.

English

A Pretty girl. You are so hot!
B Thank you.
A Can you give me your number?
B No, I can't.

Vocabulary

Traditional	Jyutping	English
靚女	leng3 nei2	pretty girl
索	sok3	hot
多謝	do1 ze6	thanks
可以	ho2 ji5	can
俾	bei2	to give
唔可以	m4 ho2 ji5	can't
電話	din6 waa2	telephone
號碼	hou6 maa5	number
電話號碼	din6 waa2 hou4 maa5	phone number

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

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我姐姐係一個靚女。	Ngo5 ze6 ze1 hai6 jat1 go3 leng3 nei2.	My sister is a pretty girl.
嘉玲好靚女。	gaa1 ling4 hou2 leng3 nei5.	Carling Lau is very good-looking.
你女友好索。 多謝誇獎！	Nei5 nei2 jou5 hou2 sok3. Do1 ze6 kwaa1 zoeng2.	Your girlfriend is hot! Thank you for the compliments!
多謝合作。 我可以搭公交。	Do1 ze6 hap6 zok3. Ngo5 ho2 ji5 daap3 gung1 gau1.	Thank you for cooperating. I can take the bus.
我哋可以一齊去。	ngo5 dei6 ho2 ji5 jat1 cai4 heoi3.	We can go together.
俾呢本書我。 火車唔可以飛。 小朋友唔得唔聽話。	Bei2 ni1 bun2 syu1 ngo5. Fo2 ce1 m4 ho2 ji5 fei1. Siu2 pang4 jau5 m4 dak1 m4 teng1 waa6.	Give me this book. Trains can't fly. Children can't be disobedient.
唔該，邊度有電話？	m4 goi1 , bin1 dou6 jau5 din6 waa2 ?	Excuse me, where can I find a phone?
你屋企號碼幾多？	nei5 uk1 kei2 hou6 maa5 gei2 do1?	What's your room number?
你電話號碼幾多？	Nei5 din6 waa2 hou4 maa5 gei2 do1?	What's your phone number?

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Grammar Points

Asking for Permission in Cantonese

可唔可以俾你電話號碼我？

"Can you give me your number?"

Our grammar focus in this lesson is on asking permission or asking someone to do you a favor using the magic phrase 可唔可以 (ho2 m4 ho2 ji5), which literally translates as, "can or cannot." The most common way to use this phrase is to put it at the beginning of a request, as in the question 可唔可以幫下我, ho2 m4 ho2 ji5 bong1 haa5 ngo5 ("Can you help me a bit?"). If it is clear what you are asking from context, you can also simply say 可唔可以 and leave the rest of the question implied. The subject of the question is usually left unstated and implied, but if you need to provide it, place it at the start of the question.

For Example:

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1. 可唔可以幫我忙？
Ho2 m4 ho2 ji5 bong1 ngo5 mong4?
"Can you help me?"
2. 可唔可以請假？
Ho2 m4 ho2 ji5 ceng2 gaa3?
"Can I have some time off?"
3. 可唔可以俾你電郵地址我？
Ho2 m4 ho2 ji5 bei2 nei5 din6 waa2 hou6 maa5 ngo5?
"Can you give me your email address?"

The proper way to answer this question is to simply answer 可以 (ho2 ji5) in the affirmative or 唔可以 (m4 ho2 ji5) in the negative.

Language Tip

Another way of asking permission is to use the phrase 得唔得 (dak1 m4 dak1), which can also mean "can or cannot," or "Does it work?" You can simply replace 可唔可以 with 得唔得 in most situations. The major difference is that unlike 可唔可以, 得唔得 is positioned at the end of a sentence. Our example sentence about asking for help would thus become 幫下我, 得唔得, bong1 haa5 ngo5, dak1 m4 dak1 ("Help me out, is that okay?").

Cultural Insight

Being Polite in Cantonese

可唔可以 is a fairly polite way to ask for permission but you can never really be too polite when you're speaking Cantonese, so let us give you a few extra words and phrases that can work like magic when you're asking for something. First of all, remember to say "please" and "thank you" by saying 唔該 (m4 goi1). You can also say 麻煩 (maa4 faan4) and 請 (cing2) to ask someone to do something for you, following this by 你 (nei5) if you want to be very specific. And when someone does you a favor, be sure to say 辛苦晒 (san1 fu2 saai3) or 多谢 (do1 ze6) to thank them for their time and effort.