



Introduction

Give Them Something to Talk About in Cantonese

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Traditional Chinese

你係邊國人啊?
我係美國人。

Jyutping

nei5 hai6 bin1 gwok3 jan4 aa3?
ngo5 hai6 mei5 gwok3 jan4.

English

Which country are you from?
I am American.

Vocabulary

Traditional	Jyutping	English
係	hai6	to be
邊	bin1	which, where, who, side
美國	mei5 gwok3	America
人	jan4	people

Vocabulary Sample Sentences

佢係女仔。
廁所喺邊度?
你有冇去過美國?

keoi5 hai6 nei5 zai2.
ci3 so2 hai2 bin1 dou6?
nei5 jau5 mou5 heoi3 gwok3
mei5 gwok3?

She is a girl.
Where is the toilet?
Have you been to America?

我哋都係中國人。

ngo5 dei6 dou1 hai6 zung1
gwok3 jan4.

We are all Chinese.

Grammar Points

What's Going On?

The grammar point is often the focus of each lesson. Most lessons build upon each other, and understanding the structure of a language is one of the fastest ways to acquire a language. We don't just throw grammar terms at you and tell you to write sentences. We take a practical approach to explaining the grammar, and we use normal English to explain how the grammar works and how to use it. Our goal is for you to learn Cantonese in a fun and easy way.

The Focus of This Lesson is Speaking about One's Nationality

我係美國人。

ng5 hei6 mei5 gwok3 jan4

"I am American."

To express nationality in Chinese, one must simply add the word 人, jan4 ("person") to the end of the country name.

For Example:

1. 美國
mei5 gwok3
"America"
2. 美國人
mei5 gwok3 jan4
"American"

In Chinese, some country names consist of a descriptive word with the word for "country" or "nation" (国, gwok3) tacked onto the end, as in the example above for America. Some other country names that follow this pattern are:

1. 英國
jing1 gwok3
"England"
2. 中國
zung1 gwok3
"China"

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3. 德國
dak1 gwok3
"Germany"
4. 法國
faat3 gwok3
"France"

Other country names we can form by transliteration.

For Example:

1. 加拿大
gaal naa4 daai6
"Canada"
2. 墨西哥
mak6 sail gol
"Mexico"
3. 意大利
ji3 daai6 lei6
"Italy"

The Site

The site is where it all comes together. There you can find bonus audio tracks, a voice recorder, lesson notes, grammar resources, line-by-line audio, a wonderful Cantonese learning community, and much more. It's like your teacher, textbook, dictionary, grammar resources, study tools, support group, and more—all in one convenient place.

Cantonese are very group-centric, so a great first step to learning to interact with Cantonese people is to participate in our great online community. So if you need some clarification about something, post it on the blog or in the forums, or send us an e-mail. We're here to help.

If you're new to Cantonese or CantoneseClass101.com, you should start listening to the introduction lessons first, which explain how our system works. We have many more lessons for you after that!

Cultural Insight

Cultural Insight Section

In the cultural insight section, we explain living in Cantonese-speaking cities, interacting with the culture, simple ways to avoid misunderstandings, and tips on using Cantonese that you won't find in any textbook. Understanding Cantonese culture is very important because there's much more to communication in Cantonese than just the words. Vocal tone, facial expressions, word choice, and even grammar itself are often governed by culture.

Interrogation from the Cantonese

Sometimes upon moving to Hong Kong, foreigners are shocked by the direct questions Cantonese people will ask them. For example, your new neighbor may, on your first meeting, barrage you with questions as to your age, marital status, why you don't have children, job, income, or eating habits. It's important to realize that this is the Cantonese peoples' way of showing interest in you. These kinds of questions are not personal in Cantonese culture; rather, they are a way of showing concern and making small talk, and getting to know someone.

As time goes on, you may find some good evasive responses. Or like many, you may just start to be more open. Learning a new language also means learning a new culture and new ways of thinking. This can really expand our horizons and challenge us. If you're not ready to show them your paystub yet, however, take a lesson from the Cantonese themselves. See how they answer you next time you ask them a personal question. You just might learn a few evasion tactics of your own.

