This section is intended to upgrade your ability to read Chinese business cards and further interact with people. Specifically, this section will (1) introduce you to some more Chinese surnames and titles; (2) help you learn how to ask about surnames and given names, and hánzì that you don’t recognize; and (3) help you inquire about people’s occupations, majors, and addresses.

I. Asking for People’s Names

In this section, eleven more Chinese surnames are introduced:

**Traditional** | **Simplified**
---|---
徐  | 徐  
孫  | 孙  
朱  | 朱  
胡  | 胡  
郭  | 郭  
林  | 林  
何  | 何  
梁  | 梁  
鄭  | 郑  
歐陽  | 欧阳
When meeting people for the first time, Chinese consider it polite to ask for surnames instead of full names.

_Nín guìxìng?_  
May I ask what your surname is?

Compared to _xìng_, _míng_ is the given name. _Xìngmíng_ means “full name”, and is only used formally such as on IDs cards, signed forms and so on.

If you want to ask about the full name, you would use another term: _míngzì_. When you meet someone of your age or younger in an informal situation, you can ask:

_Ní jiào shénme míngzì?_  
What is your name?

Reading Chinese surnames can sometimes be a challenging task because some Chinese surnames are uncommon characters that few people recognize. It is important to learn how to say a person’s surname correctly. You really do not want to take the chance that you might greet a person incorrectly at the first meeting by misreading his or her surname.

To ask for the correct reading of a character, you can ask: _zěnme niàn?_

_Niàn_ is the verb for reading aloud.
If you have trouble reading someone’s surname on his/her business card, you can ask politely—

**Duìbuqǐ, qǐngwèn nínde xìng zěnme niàn?**
Excuse me, could you please tell me how to read your surname?

Likewise, when having trouble reading full names, you can ask—

**Duìbuqǐ, qǐngwèn nínde míngzi zěnme niàn?**
Excuse me, could you please tell me how to read your full name?

**Duìbuqǐ** means “I’m sorry” or “excuse me”. This is used to express that you have inconvenienced or will inconvenience someone, or cannot comply with a request. You can replace nǐn with nǐ, but being polite is usually preferable.

If you are meeting Mr. Chen, *Chén xiānshēng*, for the first time, and you would like to confirm that he is Mr. Chen, you can ask him politely—

**Qǐngwèn, nín shì Chén xiānshēng ma?**
Excuse me, are you Mr. Chen?

If he is Mr. Chen, he may respond to you—

**Shì, wǒ jiùshì.**
Yes, I am.

**Jiùshì** means “exactly”.

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<td>对不起，请问您的姓怎么念？</td>
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<td>對不起，請問您的名字怎麼念？</td>
<td>对不起，请问您的名字怎么念？</td>
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<tr>
<td>請問，您是陳先生嗎？</td>
<td>请问，您是陈先生吗？</td>
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<td>是，我就是。</td>
<td>是，我就是。</td>
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If you look at Mr. Chen’s name card or name tag and you don’t know how to pronounce his name, you may ask—

*Chén xiānshēng, nín de míngzì zěnme niàn?*
Mr. Chen, could you tell me how to pronounce your name?

If you want to confirm the person attending the meeting is Ms. Zhu, the accountant, you can ask the person next to you:

*Qǐngwèn, tā shì Zhū kuàijì ma?*
Excuse me, is she Ms. Zhu, the accountant?

If she is Ms. Zhu, the accountant, the response may be:

*Duì, tā jiùshì Zhū kuàijì.*
Yes, she is Ms. Zhu, the accountant.

*Bù* negates verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

*Bù, tā bùshì Chén xiānshēng.*
No, he is not Mr. Chen.

*Bù, tā bùshì Zhū kuàijì.*
No, she is not Ms. Zhu, the accountant.
When you are trying to find out who the head of a department is, you can use shuí, “who” or “whom”, in a general question to ask about identity.

Qīngwèn, nǐmen zhūrèn shì shuí?
Excuse me, who is your department head?

To find out what his or her name is, you can ask in various ways—

Qīngwèn, nǐmen zhūrèn xìng shénme?
Excuse me, what is the surname of your department head?

Qīngwèn, nǐmen zhūrèn jiào shénme míngzi?
Excuse me, what is the name of your department head?

If you think Deng might be his or her surname, you can ask—

Qīngwèn, nǐmen zhūrèn xìng Deng ma?
Excuse me, is Deng the surname of your department head?

To find out who the person is that you have just seen at a party or in a meeting, you can ask someone else—

Qīngwèn, tā shì shuí?
Excuse me, who is she?

Qīngwèn, tā jiào shénme míngzi?
Excuse me, what is his name?

Tā jiào Xú Dàhǎi.
His name is Xu Dahai.
### II. Titles and Terms of Address

In Chinese, some titles may indicate people's position and occupation. For example:

- **zǒngjīnglǐ**
  general manager

- **dōngshìzhâng**
  chair of the board

- **zǒngcái**
  president of a company

- **kuàijī**
  accountant

- **gōngchéngshî**
  engineer

- **yīshēng**
  doctor, physician

You may use these titles to address people in a professional and formal manner. For example:

- **Hú dōngshìzhâng, nín hao!**
  How do you do, Mr. Hu (the chairman of the board).

Some of the terms can be shortened this way:

- **Sün zǒngjīnglǐ = Sün zōng**

- **Hú dōngshìzhâng = Hú dōng**

- **Zhèng gōngchéngshî = Zhèng gōng**

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<td>總經理</td>
<td>总经理</td>
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<td>董事長</td>
<td>董事长</td>
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<td>總裁</td>
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<td>會計</td>
<td>会计</td>
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<td>工程師</td>
<td>工程师</td>
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<tr>
<td>醫生</td>
<td>医生</td>
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<td>胡董事長，您好！</td>
<td>胡董事长，您好！</td>
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<td>孫總經理＝孫總</td>
<td>孙总经理＝孙总</td>
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<tr>
<td>胡董事長＝胡董</td>
<td>胡董事长＝胡董</td>
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<td>經工程師＝鄭工</td>
<td>郑工程师＝郑工</td>
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In informal situations, you may also address a medical doctor using the term *dài fù* instead of *yī shēng*. For example:

_Qīngwèn, Hé dàifu zài ma?_  
Excuse me, is Dr. He in?

You may ask people what their occupations are:

_Nín zuò shénme gōngzuò?_  
What’s your occupation?

Or

_Nín shì zuò shénme gōngzuò de?_  
What do you do?

_Wò shì gōngchéngshī._  
I’m an engineer.
If you are talking to someone in academia, you can exchange professional information by asking one’s academic field - *zhōnyè*, which means “major”.

* Nínde zhōnyè shì shénme?  
  What is/was your major?

  Wǒde zhōnyè shì wùlì.  
  My major is/was physics.

Or you may use *yánjiū*, “research”, to answer such a question if you are an expert doing research in this field.

* Wǒ shì yánjiū qǐyè guǎnlǐ de.  
  My research interest is/was business administration.

For a student, you may use *xué* “to learn” to ask and answer the same question:

* Ní shì xué shénme zhōnyè de?  
  What is your major?

  Wǒ shì xué wùlì de.  
  My major is physics.
When talking about your occupation, Chinese would also ask about where you work. For example:

*Nín zài nǎr gōngzuò?*
Where do you work?

Or you may ask in a more polite way:

*Nín zài nǎr gāojiù?*
Where do you work?

*Gāojiù* is a more polite phrase to ask where one works by implying that the other person has a high or prestigious position. You should never use this term to refer to yourself.

If you are working in a company, *gōngsī*, you may say:

*Wǒ zài Huáměi Màoì Gōngsī gōngzuò.*
I work at the Sino-American Trade Company.

You may find information about where people work from their business card. Besides *gōngsī*, you will probably encounter *gǔfèn yǒuxiàn gōngsī*, a joint stock limited liability company. For example:

*Huáměi Gǔfèn Yǒuxiàn Gōngsī*
the Sino-American Company, Ltd.
Jítuán, group, is the word used for a large trading and/or holding entity. For example:

Zhōngguó Zhōngxìn Jítuán Gōngsī
the CITIC Group

In a large organization such as jítuán or gōngsī, there will be specialized offices. Two such offices are the Foreign Affairs Office, wàishìchù,

and the Human Resources Office, rénshìchù.

Wài means “outside” or “foreign.”

Shì means “affairs” or “official matters.”

Chù means “office” or “agency.”

The Human Resources Office includes the term rénshì, which literally means “human-matters”.

More often than not, you may also find a foreign trade center in those large organizations. Foreign trade is duìwài màoyì.

Duìwài literally means “facing-outwards.”
A “center” is zhōngxīn. A “foreign trade center” is:

Dùiwài Màoì Zhōngxīn

If you want to know where the company is located, you can ask:

Nǐmen gōngsī zài nàr?
Where is your company?

Or

Nǐmen gōngsī de dìzhǐ shì shénme?
What is the address of your company?

When locating a place, Chinese put larger places before smaller ones. So to answer this question about the address, let’s first take a look at the Chinese hierarchical administrative system. In the Chinese government, the largest administrative division after the nation is shěng, “province”, which is equivalent to “state” in the US. Under shěng, there are shì, “cities”. And within one city, there may be many qū, “districts”. Then comes the street and street number.

For example:

Shāndōng shěng
Shandong Province

Shāndōng shěng Qīngdàō shì
Qingdao, Shandong
Now you can answer the question regarding the address of the company:

Wômen gönsï de dìzhî shi Shândöng shêng Qingdâo shì Shìnán qü Xiànggâng lù liùshíbä-hào.
The address of our company is 68 Xianggang Rd., Shinan District, Qingdao, Shandong.

When referring to a particular office such as the human resources office in a company, be sure to mention the company name first:

Huâmêi Màoyì Gõngsï rénshîchù
the Human Resources Office, Sino-American Trade Company

Sometimes qü may not be included in the address. If you are not familiar with the streets, you can ask:

Nîmen gönsï zài nâge qü?
Which district is your company located in?

Hàidiàn qü.
Haidian district.
Here is a map showing some of the provinces, shèng, the municipalities directly under the central government, zhíxiáshì, autonomous regions (which are also provinces), zìzhìqū, and the special administrative regions, tèbié xíngzhèngqū.
Here are some provinces in China:

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- Shānxī
- Hénán
- Héběi
- Guǎngdōng
- Húnán
- Húbēi
- Qīnghǎi
- Hǎinán
- Sīchuān
- Jiāngxī
- Yúnnán
- Nèiměnggǔ zìzhìqū
  - Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region
- Táiwān

- 北京市
There are four cities which are directly under the central government, called zhíxiáshì:

- Bēijīng (shì)
- Shànghǎi (shì)
- Tiānjīn (shì)
- Chóngqìng (shì)

Xiānggāng, Hong Kong, and Àomén, Macau, are two special administrative regions under the central government.

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<td>重慶(市)</td>
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<td>香港特別行政區</td>
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<td>澳門特別行政區</td>
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Xiānggāng tèbié xíngzhèngqū

Àomén tèbié xíngzhèngqū

Here are some other large cities in China:

- Xi’ān
- Guǎngzhōu
- Nánjīng
- Wǔhàn
- Qīngdǎo
- Dàlián
- Hángzhōu
You already know how to ask politely about a character you don’t know:

Qǐngwèn zhège zì zěnme niàn?
Excuse me, how do I pronounce this character?

You may make your inquiry in different ways. For example, you can ask about the name of a road as follows:

Duìbuqǐ, wǒ bù-rènshi zhè liǎngge zì, zhèshì shénme lù?
Sorry, I don’t know these two characters. Could you tell me which road this is?

Zhèshì Jiēfǎng Dàjiē.
This is Jiefang Street.

Rènshi means to recognize or to know. It also can be used to express whether or not you know someone. For example:

Wǒ hái bù-rènshi Huáng zhūrèn, nǐ néng gěi wǒ jièshào yīxià ma?
I don’t know Mr. Huang, the director, yet. Could you introduce him to me?

Dāngrán kěyì.
Of course.

Xièxiè.
Thanks.

Bù-yòng xiè.
Don’t mention it.