

Chapter Nine 第九課 Where are you going?

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Grammar

1. To greet a person during the day, you may have heard the following sentences:

Example:

A: 你好嗎? (Ni3 hao3 ma?) How are you?

B: 很好, 謝謝。(Hen3 hao3, xie4 xie.) Fine, thank you.

A: 你吃飽了嗎? (Ni3 chi1 bao3 le ma?) Have you eaten yet?

B: 我吃過了。(Wo3 chi1 guo4 le.) Yes.

A: 您上哪兒去? (Nin2 shang4 na3r qu4?) Where are you going?

B: 去洗衣服。(Qu4 xi3 yi1 fu2) I am going to the laundry.

B: 去學校。(Qu4 xue2 xiao4) I am going to school.

The greeting 你好嗎? (Ni3 hao3 ma? How are you?) has been adopted from English and is most frequently used by Chinese greeting a foreigner. Among Chinese, people might ask questions such as 你吃飽了嗎? (Ni3 chi1 bao3 le ma?) “Have you eaten yet?” or 您上哪兒去? (Nin3 shang4 na3r qu4?) “where are you going?” to a person met on the street. To reply, the person would answer vaguely by saying 很好 (hen3 hao3) “good” to the first question, and 去那兒 (qu4 na4r) “over there” to the second one. Another situation is when a person greets another person who is occupied in some activity, then, the greeting would use a phrase that describes what other person is doing. For example, if you walk into a laundry room and see your friend there, you would say to him or her 你去洗衣服呀? (Ni3 qu4 xi3 yi1 fu2 ya?) “Oh, are you doing laundry?” The other person would nod and say 是的 (shi4 de) “yes” with smile.

2. Sentence final particle for questions: 嗎

To make a statement become a question, you can simply add the particle 嗎, pronounced “ma” at the end of the sentence. This is one of the particles that must be pronounced using a neutral tone. Thus, the questions could be:

| Question particle | | Example |
|-------------------|--|--|
| 嗎 | 嗎 indicates the speaker is suspicious about the truth of the statement | * 他是學生嗎?(Is he a student?) * 她是美國人嗎? (Is she American?) * 你是老師嗎?(Are you a teacher?) |
| V — not — V | whereas the V — not — V form is a generic question, meaning that the speaker wants to know the answer. | * 他姓不姓孔? (Is his family name Kong?) * 她是不是台灣人?(Is she Taiwanese?) * 你是不是住在美國? (Do you live in the United States?) |