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A Little Bit of Language Can Go a Long Way!



Lesson 3: This Please

请给我这个。Qǐng gěi wǒ zhège.

LESSON NOTES

China is a large and diverse country. In addition to the many places to see and visit, there are also many foods to try and goods to buy! However, in order to sample these new tastes and capitalize on some of the draw-dropping deals you are sure to come across, you must be able to ask for what you want. In China there are many street vendors, shops, stores, restaurants and other locals where you can practice the phrase Qǐng gěi wǒ [something]. (Please give me [something].), which is commonly used when asking for something.

When asking for something in Chinese, you need to include the verb to give and the pronoun for the person receiving the object. The phrase used to accomplish this is Qǐng gěi wǒ [something]. (Please give me [something].), with the "something" desired positioned at the end of the sentence.

Compared to its English counterpart phrase, "[something] please." the phrase used to ask for something in Chinese is relatively complex as the receiver of the object, the indirect object, must be included. In English, the same request can be accomplished by identifying the "something" desired and following it with "please." (If it is just one thing, an indefinite article would be needed too.) The difference is exemplified in the following example:

English: A Big Mac please.

Chinese: Qǐng gěi wǒ jùwábà. (Please give me a Big Mac.)

As it is highly unlikely that you will know the word for each "something" you come to desire, using the physical location of the "something" you want to communicate this is an extremely useful tactic. For something located nearby, you can refer to the thing with the word zhège (this). Therefore, to ask for something nearby you can use the phrase Qǐng gěi wǒ zhège. (This please.) For something further away, there is the phrase Qǐng gěi wǒ nàge. (Please give me that.)

The first three characters in this sentence are 3rd tone, the rising-falling tone. When there are two consecutive 3rd tones, the first 3rd tone changes to the 2nd tone, the rising tone, while the second 3rd tone remains 3rd tone. For example, the word nǐ (you) is 3rd tone, and the word hǎo is also 3rd tone. However, when combined to form the phrase Ní hǎo. (Hello.) The first 3rd tone becomes a 2nd tone.

In the case of Qǐng gěi wǒ! there are 3 consecutive 3rd tones! While there are exceptions to this rule and linguists may take issue with this, the following rule for encountering 3 or more consecutive 3rd tones should suffice.

When there are 3 or more consecutive 3rd tones, change each 3rd tone preceding the last one to a 2nd tone.

The phrase Qǐng gěi wǒ (Please give me) is pronounced Qíng géi wǒ. (Please give me), with the first two 3rd tones changing to 2nd tones.

PHRASES

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请给我。	Qǐng gěi wǒ.	Please give me.
请给我这个。	Qǐng gěi wǒ zhège.	Please give me this.
请给我那个。	Qǐng gěi wǒ nàge.	Please give me that.

VOCABULARY

Chinese Character	Pinyin	English
请	qǐng	please (do something)
给	gěi	to give
我	wǒ	I, me
这个	zhège	this
那个	nàge	that
巨无霸	jùwúbà	Big Mac

QUICK TIP

An extremely useful tactic for conveying what you want to a vender is using body language to identify the item you want while saying , Qǐng gěi wǒ. This should be more than enough clearly convey your intention.

QUICK TIP 2

When asking for something or shopping at locals where there are no price tags, be sure to haggle over the price! The quoted price is usually much higher than the price the vender would be willing to sell at.