

# PART II

## ORTHOGRAPHY

### 正 词 法

#### 1. Common Nouns

##### 1.1 Introduction

A noun represents the name of a person or object. A common noun represents a general class of people or objects rather than a specific, individual person or object.

Since the **number** of syllables in a word is an important factor in HP orthography, we will begin by giving some examples of common nouns arranged by the number of syllables in each.

*Nouns of one syllable:*

rén 人 (person);

huā 花 (flower);

mén 门 (door, gate);

huǒ 火 (fire);

xìn 信 (letter);

qiāng 枪 (gun);

hǎi 海 (sea);

shān 山 (mountain);

mǎ 马 (horse);

bǐ 笔 (pen, brush);

dāo 刀 (knife);

bìng 病 (illness);

nián 年 (year);

diàn 电 (electricity);

bù 布 (cloth);

shǒu 手 (hand);

cūn 村 (village);

dōng 东 (east).

*Nouns of two syllables:*

tàiyang 太阳 (sun);

jīnzi 金子 (gold);

jīdàn 鸡蛋 (egg);

yīfu 衣服 (clothing);

shēntǐ 身体 (body);

shìjiè 世界 (world);

yuányīn 原因 (reason);

kēxué 科学 (science);

míngnián 明年 (next year);

sēnlín 森林 (forest);

lǎohǔ 老虎 (tiger);

māmā 妈妈 (mother);

yīyuàn 医院 (hospital);

guójiā 国家 (country);

wénhuà 文化 (culture);

jīngjì 经济 (economy);

mínzhǔ 民主 (democracy);

shìjiàn 事件 (incident).

*Nouns of three syllables:*

xiàngrikui 向日葵

(sunflower);

túshūguǎn 图书馆 (library);

diànshìjī 电视机 (TV set);

mǎlíngshǔ 马铃薯 (potato);

fēijīchǎng 飞机场 (airport);

shēngchǎnlǜ 生产率 (productivity).

*Nouns of four or more syllables:*

àiguózhǔyì 爱国主义 (patriotism);

yǔyánxuéjiā 语言学家 (linguist);

tuōlājīshǒu 拖拉机手 (tractor driver);

hóngshìzìhuì 红十字会 (Red Cross);

gǔshēngwùxuéjiā 古生物学家 (paleontologist).

Words of one or two syllables are by far the most common sort in Putonghua; they account for over 95% of all words, sharing that percentage in nearly equal proportions. Three-syllable

words take third place with less than 3% of the total, and words of over three syllables take up the remainder. The majority of words over three syllables in length are nouns.

## 1.2 Simple Nouns

Simple nouns are those which cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful components. In Putonghua, almost all simple nouns are monosyllabic (See “Nouns of one syllable” above for examples). Putonghua also has a small number of two-syllable simple nouns. These words are always written as one unit, without a space between the syllables, e.g.:

pútao 葡萄 (grape);	méiguì 玫瑰 (rose);
luóbo 萝卜 (radish);	húdié 蝴蝶 (butterfly);
mǎyǐ 蚂蚁 (ant);	zhīzhū 蜘蛛 (spider);
kuǐlǐ 傀儡 (puppet);	lājī 垃圾 (garbage);
hútòng 胡同 (alley);	héshàng 和尚 (Buddhist
níngméng 柠檬 (lemon);	monk);
bōluó 菠萝 (pineapple).	

Recent and modern loan words from foreign languages (the majority from English), transliterated in Putonghua, are also simple nouns, as they cannot be broken down into smaller meaningful components. These words, regardless of number of syllables, are always written as one unit. E.g.:

léidá 雷达 (radar);	tǎnkè 坦克 (tank);
kāfēi 咖啡 (coffee);	mótuō 摩托 (motor);
qiǎokèlì 巧克力 (chocolate);	jiǎkè 夹克 (jacket);
	fǎxīstī 法西斯 (fascist);

āsipīlín 阿斯匹林 (aspirin); xiēsīdǐlǐ 歇斯底里 (hysteria).

In dictionaries and other printed matter, common nouns transliterated from other languages are usually written according to their Putonghua pronunciations, with tone markers. Some people advocate writing these loan words according to their spelling in the original language, but such a reform would be difficult to achieve at present. See Chapter 2, Section 4 for the somewhat different treatment of proper nouns (personal and place names) from foreign languages.

### 1.3 Nouns with Prefixes

The prefixes that can be attached to nouns in Putonghua are all monosyllabic. These prefixes have either a supplementary meaning or no meaning at all, and are dependent in nature (though some of them can stand on their own in other environments, when not acting as prefixes). The most commonly used prefixes are introduced below.

ā- (阿-): used in addressing relatives, or to convey a sentiment of intimacy or respect. E.g.:

ā+ yí 姨 (aunt) → āyí 阿姨 (aunt, auntie);

ā+ gē 哥 (older brother) → āgē 阿哥 (older brother);

ā+ pó 婆 (mother-in-law) → āpó 阿婆 (mother-in-law).

lǎo- (老-): used in the names of certain types of people and occupations, as well as in certain plant and animal names. Its independently meaning of “old” does not apply when it is used as a prefix. E.g.:

lǎo + shī 师 (teacher) → lǎoshī 老师 (teacher);

lǎo + dì 弟 (younger brother) → lǎodì 老弟 (young man);

lǎo + xiāng 乡 (hometown) → lǎoxiāng 老乡 (fellow townman);

lǎo + bǎixìng 百姓 (common people) → lǎobǎixìng 老百姓 (common people);

lǎo + hǔ 虎 (tiger) → lǎohǔ 老虎 (tiger);

lǎo + yīng 鹰 (eagle) → lǎoyīng 老鹰 (eagle);

lǎo + yùmǐ 玉米 (corn) → lǎoyùmǐ 老玉米 (corn).

Note: the lǎo of lǎorén 老人 (old person) is not a prefix, even though the two syllables are written together; in this word, lǎo retains its original meaning of “old”.

xiǎo-(小 -): used in intimate or affectionate forms of address. In its capacity as a prefix, xiǎo partially or wholly loses its original meaning of “small”. E.g.:

xiǎo + gǒu 狗 (dog) → xiǎogǒu 小狗 (dog);

xiǎo + hái 孩 (child) → xiǎohái 小孩 (child);

xiǎo + guǐ 鬼 (ghost) → xiǎoguǐ 小鬼 (“little devil”);

xiǎo + biàn 辮 (braid) → xiǎobiàn 小辮 (pigtail);

xiǎo + jiě 姐 (older sister) → xiǎojiě 小姐 (young lady);

xiǎo + jiùzi 舅子 (brother-in-law) → xiǎojiùzi 小舅子  
(brother-in-law);

xiǎo + niángzi 娘子 (young woman) → xiǎoniángzi 小娘子  
(young woman).

fù-(副-): when prefixed to the name of an occupation, indicates secondary or assistant status. E.g.:

fù + zhǔxí 主席 (chairman) → fùzhǔxí 副主席 (vice-chairman);

fù + jiàoshòu 教授 (professor) → fùjiàoshòu 副教授 (assistant professor);

fù + gōngchéngshī 工程师 (engineer) → fùgōngchéngshī 副工程师 (assistant engineer);

fù + zǒnggōngchéngshī 总工程师 (chief engineer) → fùzǒnggōngchéngshī 副总工程师 (assistant chief engineer).

Noun prefixes are gaining ever wider usage in the terminology of the natural and social sciences. These include:

fēi-(非-): indicates negation.

fēi + jīnshǔ 金属 (metal) → fēijīnshǔ 非金属 (nonmetal);

fēi + huìyuán 会员 (member) → fēihuìyuán 非会员 (nonmember);

fēi + dǎotǐ 导体 (conductor) → fēidǎotǐ 非导体 (nonconductor);

fēi + tiáojiàn fǎnshè 条件反射 (conditioned reflex) → fēitiáojiàn fǎnshè 非条件反射 (nonconditioned reflex);

fǎn-(反-): indicates opposition or reversal.

fǎn + gémìng 革命 (revolution) → fǎngémìng 反革命 (counterrevolutionary);

fǎn + fǎxī 法西斯 (fascist) → fǎnfǎxī 反法西斯

(antifascist);

fǎn + hánshù 函数 (function) → fǎnhánshù 反函数 (inverse function).

bèi-(被-): indicates passivity, that what it modifies is the object rather than the agent of the action.

bèi + chéngshù 乘数 (multiplier) → bèichéngshù 被乘数 (multiplicand);

bèi + xuǎnjǔquán 选举权 (the right to vote) → bèixuǎnjǔquán 被选举权 (the right to be elected).

bàn-(半-): indicates “semi-”, not to the full degree.

bàn + fēngjiàn 封建 (feudalism) → bànfēngjiàn 半封建 (semifeudalism);

bàn + yuányīn 元音 (vowel) → bànyuányīn 半元音 (semivowel);

bàn + dǎotǐ 导体 (conductor) → bàndǎotǐ 半导体 (semiconductor);

bàn + zhímíndì 殖民地 (colony) → bànzhímíndì 半殖民地 (semicolony).

chāo-(超-): indicates “ultra-” to an excessive degree.

chāo + xiànshí 现实 (reality) → chāoxiànshí 超现实 (surreal);

chāo + shēngbō 声波 (sound wave) → chāoshēngbō 超声波 (ultrasonic wave);

chāo + yīnsù 音速 (speed of sound) → chāoyīnsù 超音速 (supersonic);

chǎo + dǎodiànxìng (electrical conductivity) →  
chǎodǎodiànxìng 超导电性 (superconductivity).

## 1.4 Nouns with Suffixes

Suffixes that can be attached to nouns in Putonghua are monosyllabic (except for -r; see below). Like noun prefixes, they are dependent in nature; that is, their meaning and function when they stand alone are different from when they act as prefixes. Some noun suffixes have no lexical meaning, and serve only to mark the word they attach to as a noun; others have meanings that supplement that of the nouns to which they attach, while still others have relatively concrete meanings. Noun suffixes (as well as verb and adjective suffixes, for which see succeeding chapters) are always written as one unit with the noun they attach to.

Among the most common noun suffixes are the following:

-zi(-子): has no concrete meaning; serves only as a noun marker. It is always read in the neutral tone when it acts in the capacity of suffix.

zhuō 桌 (table) + zi → zhuōzi 桌子 (table);

dāo 刀 (knife) + zi → dāozi 刀子 (knife);

shuā 刷 (verb, to brush) + zi → shuāzi 刷子 (brush);

jiǎn 剪 (verb, to cut) + zi → jiǎnzi 剪子 (scissors);

pàng 胖 (adjective, fat) + zi → pàngzi 胖子 (fat person).

Note: the zi in diànzǐ 电子 (electron) and yuánzǐ 原子 (atom) is not a suffix and must not be read in the neutral tone.

-r(-儿): gives to the noun it follows the attributes of



smallness or cuteness, or indicates intimacy or affection on the speaker's part toward the object signified. -r is used widely in speech. It is the only suffix that does not constitute a syllable on its own; it is always linked phonetically onto the syllable preceding. (For the changes this produces in pronunciation, See Part I, Chapter 12, Section 3.)

huā 花 (flower) + r → huār 花儿 (flower);

xiǎoniǎo 小鸟 (little bird) + r → xiǎoniǎor 小鸟儿 (little bird);

nǚhái 女孩 (girl) + r → nǚhàir 女孩儿 (girl);

gǔn 滚 (verb, to roll) + r → gǔnr 滚儿 (somersault; used in "dǎ gè gǔnr", 打个滚儿 to roll over);

huó 活 (adjective, alive) + r → huór 活儿 (work; as in "gànle huór 干了活儿, worked).

-tou(-头): has no concrete meaning; it serves only as a noun marker. When it acts as a suffix, -tou is read in the neutral tone.

mù 木 (wood) + tou → mùtou 木头 (wood);

shí 石 (stone) + tou → shítou 石头 (stone, rock);

niàn 念 (idea) + tou → niàntou 念头 (idea);

tián 甜 (adjective, sweet) + tou → tiántou 甜头 (good, benefit).

-tou is often further suffixed by -r in speech, producing constructions such as lǎotóur 老头儿 (old man) and tiántóur 甜头儿 (good, benefit).

Note: the *tóu* of *dàntóu* 弹头 (warhead) is not a suffix, and must not be read in the neutral tone. It has a concrete meaning and forms part of a compound noun.

—*zhě*(—者): when suffixed to a verb, indicates the performer of the action or kind of work signified by the verb. In this capacity it acts much like the English suffix —er (worker, reporter).

When suffixed to an adjective, —*zhě* indicates a person with the qualities signified by that adjective.

*dú* 读 (verb, to read) + *zhě* → *dúzhě* 读者 (reader);

*jì* 记 (verb, to write down) + *zhě* → *jìzhě* 记者 (reporter);

*biǎoyǎn* 表演 (verb, to perform) + *zhě* → *biǎoyǎnzhě* 表演者 (performer);

*lǎo* 老 (adjective, old) + *zhě* → *lǎozhě* 老者 (old man);

*shènglì* 胜利 (noun, victory) + *zhě* → *shènglìzhě* 胜利者 (victor).

—*men*(—们): suffixed to nouns that refer to people, indicates the plural of these nouns. —*men* is different from the other suffixes above in that it serves a purely grammatical function, that of pluralization. —*men* is always read in the neutral tone.

*tóngxué* 同学 (classmate) + *men* → *tóngxuémen* 同学们 (classmates);

*péngyǒu* 朋友 (friend) + *men* → *péngyǒumen* 朋友们 (friends);

*gūniáng* 姑娘 (girl) + *men* → *gūniángmen* 姑娘们 (girls);

*rén* 人 (person) + *men* → *rénmen* 人们 (people).

All nouns of Putonghua, including those that refer to people, can indicate either the singular or the plural without changing form in any way. *-men* is only used with nouns indicating people, and only when there is a particular need to stress plurality. The more common method of indicating the plural is to precede the noun with a phrase indicating an exact or approximate number; when such a phrase is used with nouns indicating people, *-men* cannot be used. For example, it is correct to say “*gūnniángmen*” 姑娘们 (girls) or “*sān gè gūniáng*” 三个姑娘 (three girls), but incorrect to say “*sān gè gūniángmen*.” In this, *-men* differs from plural markers in other languages.

In addition to the more representative noun suffixes introduced above, Putonghua also has many noun suffixes with more concrete meanings. These suffixes too are written as one unit with the word they attach to. A few examples follow:

*yuán* 员 (person): *xuéyuán* 学员 (student), *yùndòngyuán* 运动员 (athlete), *dǎzìyuán* 打字员 (typist), *lǐfàyuán* 理发员 (hairdresser);

*zhǎng* 长 (chief, head): *xiàozhǎng* 校长 (school president), *chuánzhǎng* 船长 (ship captain), *sīwùzhǎng* 司务长 (mess-officer);

*shì* 士 (person with a particular skill): *zhànshì* 战士 (soldier), *qíshì* 骑士 (knight), *hùshì* 护士 (nurse), *chuánjiàoshì* 传教士 (missionary);

*jiā* 家 (specialist, expert): *zuòjiā* 作家 (writer), *huàjiā* 画家 (painter), *wénxuéjiā* 文学家 (person of letters), *yǔyánxuéjiā* 语言学家 (linguist), *tànxǎnjiā* 探险家 (explorer);

**shī** 师 (teacher, master): **jīàoshī** 教师 (teacher), **lǜshī** 律师 (lawyer), **gōngchéngshī** 工程师 (engineer), **móshùshī** 魔术师 (magician);

**shǒu** 手 (person with a particular skill): **shuǐshǒu** 水手 (sailor), **gǔlǜshǒu** 刽子手 (executioner), **duōmiànshǒu** 多面手 (all-rounder), **tuōlājīshǒu** 拖拉机手 (tractor driver);

**shēng** 生 (student): **yīshēng** 医生 (doctor), **kǎoshēng** 考生 (examinee), **yánjiūshēng** 研究生 (graduate student), **liúxuéshēng** 留学生 (foreign student), **shíxíshēng** 实习生 (trainee);

**jī** 机 (machine): **dǎzìjī** 打字机 (typewriter), **diànshìjī** 电视机 (TV set), **lùyīnjī** 录音机 (tape recorder);

**qì** 器 (device): **liángjiǎoqì** 量角器 (protractor), **biànyǎqì** 变压器 (transformer), **xīchénqì** 吸尘器 (vacuum cleaner), **zhùtīngqì** 助听器 (hearing aid);

**yí** 仪 (instrument): **dìqiúyí** 地球仪 (terrestrial globe), **shuǐpíngyí** 水平仪 (carpenter's level), **huìtúyí** 绘图仪 (drafting tool);

**pǐn** 品 (product): **shípin** 食品 (food, foodstuff), **yàopin** 药品 (medicines), **yìnshuāpǐn** 印刷品 (printed matter);

**dù** 度 (degree): **wēndù** 温度 (temperature), **gāodù** 高度 (height), **róngjiědù** 溶解度 (solubility), **néngjiàndù** 能见度 (visibility);

**xìng** 性 (nature): **tóngxìng** 弹性 (elasticity), **zhòngyàoxìng** 重要性 (importance), **chuàngzàoxìng** 创造性 (creativity);

**fǎ** 法 (method; law): **shuōfǎ** 说法 (wording; statement), **xiǎngfǎ** 想法 (idea, opinion), **tújiěfǎ** 图解法 (graphic method), **hūnyīnfǎ** 婚姻法 (marriage law), **sùsòngfǎ** 诉讼法 (procedural law);

xué 学 (subject of study, branch of learning): wénxué 文学 (literature), shùxué 数学 (mathematics), tiānwénxué 天文学 (astronomy), shēngwùxué 生物学 (biology), rénleixué 人类学 (anthropology).

Noun suffixes like these, with their own concrete meaning, are almost always monosyllabic. The only exception is zhǔyì 主义 (–ism), which is most likely influenced by usage in foreign languages (e.g. the widespread use of “–ism” in English). zhǔyì 主义 is generally written as a unit with the word to which it attaches:

zìyóuzhǔyì 自由主义 (liberalism);  
gèrénzhǔyì 个人主义 (individualism);  
fēngjiànzhǔyì 封建主义 (feudalism);  
wéiwùzhǔyì 唯物主义 (materialism);  
shèhuìzhǔyì 社会主义 (socialism).

Many of the longer nouns of Putonghua, those of three or more syllables, consist of word roots extended by prefixes or suffixes or both. These words are always written as one unit, regardless of length. For example:

yǔyán 语言 (language) + xué 学 (suffix: study) + jiā 家 (suffix: expert) + men 们 (suffix: indicating plural) → yǔyánxuéjiāmen 语言学家们 (linguists);

fù 副 (prefix: assistant) + zǒng 总 (prefix: chief, head) + gōngchéng 工程 (engineering) + shī 师 (suffix: master) → fùzǒnggōngchéngshī 副总工程师 (assistant chief engineer).

Words of this length are most commonly found in the vo-

cabularies of the natural and social sciences. They appear only rarely in ordinary speech or writing.

### 1.5 Reduplicated Nouns

Nouns which are reduplicated in form, that is, nouns which consist of the same element repeated twice, are divided into two sorts, as discussed below. Reduplicated nouns of either class are always written as a single unit.

Reduplicated nouns of the first type consist of the repetition of a single-syllable morpheme. Some of these morphemes can stand alone as a word in their own right (an example is the *mā* of *māma* 妈妈 mother), while others can never appear singly (an example is the *lǎo* of *lǎolao* 姥姥 maternal grandmother).

*māma* 妈妈 (mother), *bàba* 爸爸 (father),  
*gēge* 哥哥 (older brother), *didi* 弟弟 (younger brother),  
*jiějie* 姐姐 (older sister), *mèimei* 妹妹 (younger sister),  
*lǎolao* 姥姥 (maternal grandmother), *nǎinai* 奶奶 (paternal grandmother),  
*xīngxing* 星星 (star), *bǎobao* 宝宝 (baby),  
*qūqur* 蚰蚰儿 (cricket), *guōguor* 蝈蝈儿 (katydid).

Reduplicated nouns of the second type consist of the repetition of a single-syllable noun. The repetition of a noun in this manner fulfills a grammatical purpose, as when *rén* 人 (person) reduplicated to *rénrén* produces the meaning “everyone”. Only an extremely limited number of nouns can undergo this type of reduplication; the few most common ones are listed below.

rén 人 (person):	rénrén 人人 (everybody);
jiā 家 (family):	jiājiā 家家 (every family);
shì 事 (matter, affair):	shìshì 事事 (every matter);
tiān 天 (day):	tiāntiān 天天 (every day);
nián 年 (year):	niánnián 年年 (every year);
chù 处 (place):	chùchù 处处 (everywhere).

Reduplicated nouns of this sort usually function as adverbs in speech, e.g. Tā tiāntiān kàn xiǎoshuō. 他天天看小说. (He reads novels every day).

When one reduplicated noun follows another in a four-character sequence, the two nouns are separated by a hyphen:

nánmán-nǚnǚ 男男女女 (every man and every woman);  
jiājiā-hùhù 家家户户 (every family);  
rì rì - yè yè 日日夜夜 (every day and every night);  
cūncūn-zhàizhài 村村寨寨 (every village).

It should be noted that the nouns that can appear in this AA-BB sort of construction are extremely limited in number. They are also fairly well fixed in usages; one cannot simply invent new ones on the basis of analogy.

## 1.6 Nouns of Modifier-Modified Construction

These are composed of a simple noun preceded by a modifying or qualifying element. This kind of noun construction is the

most common sort in Putonghua; it is also the most complicated in terms of orthography. This class of nouns is divided into several subgroups for consideration below; on the basis of component elements.

**1) Noun + noun**

In this type of construction, the first noun is the qualifier and the second noun the actual noun element. In some nouns of this type, one of the components is a transliterated loan word (see examples below).

1 + 1 (monosyllable + monosyllable): nouns of this type are always written as one word:

niú 牛 (cow) + ròu 肉 (meat) → niúròu 牛肉 (beef);

tiě 铁 (iron) + lù 路 (road) → tiělù 铁路 (railroad);

bù 布 (cloth) + xié 鞋 (shoes) → bùxié 布鞋 (cloth shoes);

fàn 饭 (rice) + wǎn 碗 (bowl) → fànwǎn 饭碗 (rice bowl);

fēng 风 (wind) + chē 车 (machine) → fēngchē 风车 (windmill);

hǎi 海 (sea) + shuǐ 水 (water) → hǎishuǐ 海水 (seawater);

jīn 金 (gold) + kuàng 矿 (mine) → jīnkuàng 金矿 (gold mine);

kǎ 卡 (from "car") + chē 车 (vehicle) → kǎchē 卡车 (truck);

pí 啤 (from "beer") + jiǔ 酒 (wine) → píjiǔ 啤酒 (beer);

shuǐ 水 (water) + bèng 泵 (from "pump") → shuǐbèng 水泵 (pump);

jiǔ 酒 (wine) + bā 吧 (from "bar") → jiǔbā 酒吧 (bar).



**1 + 2 (monosyllable + bisyllable):** nouns of this type are always written as one unit;

shǒu 手 (hand) + fēngqín 风琴 (organ) → shǒufēngqín 手风琴 (accordion);

mǎ 马 (horse) + wěiba 尾巴 (tail) → mǎ wěi ba 马尾巴 (ponytail);

bīng 冰 (ice) + jīlín 激淋 (from "cream") → bīngjīlín 冰激淋 (ice cream).

The nouns **nán 男** (male, man) and **nǚ 女** (female, woman) are particularly productive qualifying components, and are often used in this type of noun construction. They can combine with other nouns to form nouns of two to five syllables in length. All such constructions are written as one unit;

nán 男 (male) + yǎnyuán 演员 (actor) → nányǎnyuán 男演员 (actor);

nǚ 女 (female) + yīshēng 医生 (doctor) → nǚyīshēng 女医生 (woman doctor);

nǚ 女 (female) + lǐfàshī 理发师 (hairdresser) → nǚlǐfàshī 女理发师 (woman hairdresser);

nǚ 女 (female) + tuōlājīshǒu 拖拉机手 (tractor driver) → nǚtuōlājīshǒu 女拖拉机手 (woman tractor driver).

**2 + 1 (bisyllable + monosyllable):** nouns of this type are always written as one unit:

shuǐdào 水稻 (paddy rice) + tián 田 (field) → shuǐdàotián  
水稻田 (rice paddy);

huāshēng 花生 (peanut) + táng 糖 (candy) →  
huāshēngtáng 花生糖 (peanut brittle);

diànyǎo 电压 (voltage) + biǎo 表 (meter) → diànyǎobiǎo 电  
压表 (voltmeter);

Zhōngguó 中国 (China) + rén 人 (person) →  
Zhōngguórén 中国人 (Chinese person);

jípǔ 吉普 (from “jeep”) + chē 车 (vehicle) → jípǔchē 吉普  
车 (jeep).

The 2 + 1 principle may be expanded to produce nouns of 3  
+ 1 construction, such as:

tiānwénxué 天文学 (astronomy) + shū 书 (book) →  
tiānwénxuéshū 天文学书 (astronomy book);

báilándì 白兰地 (from “brandy”) + jiǔ 酒 (wine) →  
báilándìjiǔ 白兰地酒 (brandy);

qiǎokèlì 巧克力 (from “chocolate”) + táng 糖 (candy) →  
qiǎokèlìtáng 巧克力糖 (chocolate).

It is important to realize that the root word + suffix nouns  
described in Section 1.4 (e.g. diànshìjī 电视机, TV set) and the 2 +  
1 and 3 + 1 noun + noun constructions described here (e.g.  
huāshēngtáng 花生糖 (peanut brittle), diànyǎobiǎo 电压表  
(voltmeter)), though very similar in form, are not identical. The  
difference between them lies in the nature of their final compo-  
nents. The final component of the first sort, as jī 机 (machine), is

dependent; the final component of the second sort, as *tóng* 糖 (candy) and *biǎo* 表 (meter), is independent and can stand on its own. As this criterion of dependence can be extremely hard to judge, a simple rule is laid down: all word constructions of 2 + 1 syllable form are to be written as one unit. (There is one exception to this rule, namely the 2-syllable adjective + 1-syllable noun construction; see below for an explanation of this construction.)

2 + 2 (bisyllabic + bisyllabic): nouns of this type are always written as two units, that is, with a space between the two noun components. This rule applies invariably, regardless of whether the components have strong or weak semantic ties. The operating principle of “pairs repel” suggested by Professor Zhōu Yǒuguāng 周有光 applies here. Some examples of 2 + 2 construction follow (the topic is touched upon again in Section 1. 11):

*jīngjì* 经济 (economy) + *wēijī* 危机 (crisis) → *jīngjì wēijī* 经济危机 (economic crisis);

*bǎihuò* 百货 (merchandise) + *gōngsī* 公司 (company) → *bǎihuò gōngsī* 百货公司 (department store);

*nóngmín* 农民 (peasant) + *jiējí* 阶级 (class) → *nóngmín jiējí* 农民阶级 (the peasant class);

*yuánzǐ* 原子 (atom) + *wùlǐ* 物理 (physics) → *yuánzǐ wùlǐ* 原子物理 (atomic physics);

*zhīshì* 知识 (knowledge) + *fēnzǐ* 分子 (element) → *zhīshì fēnzǐ* 知识分子 (intellectuals).

It is opportune to mention at this point some questions concerning lexicography, the cataloguing of words. In the beginning

of this section, the word *niúròu* 牛肉 (beef), composed of *niú* 牛 (cow) and *ròu* 肉 (meat), was given as an example of a noun + noun construction, to be written as one word. It would seem reasonable to extend the analogy of this word to similar words and to write them too as one unit—*zhūròu* 猪肉 (pig + meat, pork), *jīròu* 鸡肉 (chicken + meat, chicken), *gǒuròu* 狗肉 (dog meat), *shéròu* 蛇肉 (snake meat), *lǎohǔròu* 老虎肉 (tiger meat), etc. Now, it is impossible and indeed unnecessary to include all such words in a dictionary. Some dictionaries list only the most common ones, such as *niúròu* 牛肉 (beef) and *zhūròu* 猪肉 (pork); others list none. Thus, the inclusion in or omission from a dictionary is not enough to determine whether a given construction is one word or two; the number of actual words must always be larger than the number of words included in any dictionary.

## 2) Verb + noun

In this type of construction the verb component acts as the qualifying element, modifying the noun component that follows. The rules of orthography for this type of noun are much the same as those for the noun + noun constructions explained above.

1 + 1; are always written as one unit.

*fēi* 飞 (to fly) + *chuán* 船 (ship) → *fēichuán* 飞船  
(dirigible);

*jiǎn* 剪 (to cut) + *dāo* 刀 (knife) → *jiǎndāo* 剪刀 (scissors);

*guà* 挂 (to hang) + *tú* 图 (picture, map) → *guàtú* 挂图  
(wall map);

*tiào* 跳 (to jump) + *bǎn* 板 (board) → *tiàobǎn* 跳板  
(springboard);

lái 来 (to come) + xìn 信 (letter) → láixìn 来信 (incoming letter).

This construction is frequently seen in food words, as:

chǎo 炒 (to stir-fry) + ròu 肉 (meat) → chǎoròu 炒肉 (stir-fried meat);

kǎo 烤 (to roast) + yā 鸭 (duck) → kǎoyā 烤鸭 (roast duck);

jiān 煎 (to fry) + dàn 蛋 (egg) → jiāndàn 煎蛋 (fried egg);

zhēng 蒸 (to steam) + yú 鱼 (fish) → zhēngyú 蒸鱼 (steamed fish);

pào 泡 (to pickle) + cài 菜 (vegetable) → pàocài 泡菜 (pickled vegetables).

1 + 2: are always written as one unit.

chuí 垂 (to hang) + yángliǔ 杨柳 (willow) → chuíyángliǔ 垂杨柳 (weeping willow);

dài 代 (to substitute for) + zǒnglǐ 总理 (premier) → dàizǒnglǐ 代总理 (acting premier);

dài 代 (to substitute for) + míngcí 名词 (noun) → dàimíngcí 代名词 (pronoun);

chǎo 炒 (to stir-fry) + báicài 白菜 (Chinese cabbage) → chǎobáicài 炒白菜 (stir-fried Chinese cabbage);

jiān 煎 (to fry) + jīdàn 鸡蛋 (egg) → jiānjīdàn 煎鸡蛋 (fried egg).

2 + 1: are always written as one unit.

jièshào 介绍 (to introduce) + rén 人 (person) →  
jièshàorén 介绍人 (sponsor);

shìyàn 试验 (to experiment) + tián 田 (field) →  
shìyàntián 试验田 (experimental field);

diàochá 调查 (to investigate) + biǎo 表 (form) →  
diàochábiǎo 调查表 (questionnaire);

bǎoxiǎn 保险 (to be safe) + dāo 刀 (knife) →  
bǎoxiǎndāo 保险刀 (safety razor).

The two-syllable verb that constitutes the 2 of this 2 + 1 construction sometimes proves, in independent usage, to be a two-word verb construction. This does not, however, affect the rule stated above of nouns being written as one unit. Consider the examples below:

cǎichárén 采茶人 (to pick tea + person: tea picker),

cǎi chá 采茶 (to pick tea) is two words;

hàirénchóng 害人虫 (to harm people + insect: vermin,  
evil person),

hài rén 害人 (to harm people) is two words;

shǒucáinú 守财奴 (to guard wealth + slave: miser),

shǒu cái 守财 (to guard wealth) is two words.

As mentioned above, an encompassing rule can be laid down about 2 + 1 constructions: any construction formed of a two-syllable compound (excepting two-syllable adjectives, for which see

below) followed by a one-syllable noun or nounlike component is always to be written as one word. For example:

rénzàosi 人造丝 (rayon): rén 人 (person) + zào 造 (to make), sī 丝 (thread);

wàiláihuò 外来货 (imported goods): wài 外 (outside) + lái 来 (to come), huò 货 (goods);

fēimáotuǐ 飞毛腿 (fleet-footed person): fēi 飞 (to fly) + máo 毛 (fur), tuǐ 腿 (leg);

bùdǎowēng 不倒翁 (tumbling toy, roly-poly): bù 不 (no, not) + dǎo 倒 (to fall over), wēng 翁 (old man);

gāoshèpào 高射炮 (antiaircraft gun): gāo 高 (high) + shè 射 (to shoot), pào 炮 (gun, cannon).

2 + 2: according to the principle of “pairs repel” mentioned above, these constructions are always written as two words.

xuéxí 学习 (to study) + wénjiàn 文件 (documents) →  
xuéxí wénjiàn 学习文件 (documents for study);

yánjiū 研究 (research) + cáiliào 材料 (material) → yánjiū  
cáiliào 研究材料 (research materials);

tǎolùn 讨论 (to discuss) + tí mù 题目 (topic) → tǎolùn  
tí mù 讨论题目 (topic of discussion).

Note that xuéxí, yánjiū and tǎolùn in the constructions above serve as modifiers for the nouns that follow them. Because of the absence of morphological changes (modifications that indicate what part of speech a word is functioning as in a given situa-

tion) in Putonghua, however, each of the examples above may be interpreted as either a modifier–modified construction or as a verb–object construction. The ambiguity is usually resolved by the context in which the construction appears, as below:

Jīntiān xiàwǔ wǒmen xuéxí wénjiàn. 今天下午我们学习文件。

(This afternoon we will study documents.)

Here, xuéxí wénjiàn is a verb–object construction.

Zhuōzi shàng fàngzhe hěn duō xuéxí wénjiàn. 桌子上放着很多学习文件。(There are a lot of documents for study on the table.)

Here, xuéxí wénjiàn is a modifier–modified noun construction.

### 3) Adjective + noun

In noun constructions of this type, the adjective component is the modifying element, the noun component the modified element. This type of construction is one of the most difficult ones to lay down rules of HP orthography for. The problem arises because the adjective noun construction is extremely common in Putonghua both in forming words and in forming sentences, and it can be very difficult to tell whether a given adjective–noun construction is a single word or a phrase consisting of several words. There is no clear boundary between the two. The most awkward situation occurs when both adjective and noun can stand alone as independent words. We will take this situation as our point of emphasis in the discussion below.



The first situation to be considered is that in which the meaning of the construction as a whole cannot be obtained by simply adding together the meanings of its two components. Such constructions must always be written as one word. For example, the two components of *báicài* 白菜 (Chinese cabbage), *bái* 白 (white) and *cài* 菜 (vegetable), can both stand as independent words; but the sum of their independent meanings ("white vegetable") does not produce the meaning of the construction they form together. The same is true of the construction *xīnfáng* 新房 (bridal chamber), whose components *xīn* 新 (new) and *fáng* 房 (room) can each stand on their own; and of *zhònggōngyè* 重工业 (heavy industry), made up of the independent components *zhòng* 重 (heavy) and *gōngyè* 工业 (industry).

The second situation to be considered is that in which the meaning of the construction as a whole is equivalent to the sum of the meanings of its two components, but in which the construction has nonetheless come to be treated as a single concept. The original meaning of such a construction will sometimes undergo a slight change over time; some times the meaning of one of the components (most commonly the adjective) will be de-emphasized or altogether lost. This sort of construction lies somewhere on the border between single words and phrases; in HP orthography, it is always written as a single word. For example, the meaning of *gāoshān* 高山 (high mountain) can be adduced from its components *gāo* 高 (high) and *shān* 山 (mountain); moreover, this construction appears with high frequency, whereas the similar construction *ǎi shān* 矮山 (low mountain) appears seldom or never (the phrase *ǎi de shān* 矮的山 or *hěn ǎi de shān* 很矮的山 is

generally used to cover the meaning “low mountain”). It is clear, then, that *gāoshān* 高山 has developed into a single concept. In usage, the meaning of *gāo* 高 is de-emphasized, while *shān* 山 is emphasized. The same holds for *dàhǎi* 大海 (large sea, or simply sea). The sea is naturally large, and there is no “*xiǎohǎi*” 小海 (small sea) in the vocabulary with which to contrast it. The meaning of *dà* 大 (large) has become de-emphasized and that of *hǎi* 海 (sea) emphasized.

A similar sort of unified concept is expressed in *hóngqí* 红旗 (red flag), which in addition to its literal meaning also carries the associated meanings of “revolution” and “advance.” Another example is found in *quánguó* 全国 (the whole country), an extremely common usage which is written as one word. Less commonly used examples of the same construction are always written as two words: *quán shěng* 全省 (the whole province), *quán xiàn* 全县 (the whole county), *quán shìjiè* 全世界 (the whole world).

If an adjective-noun construction does not fit either of the situations outlined above, that is, if its meaning is merely the sum of the meanings of its components, if neither component’s meaning is altered or de-emphasized, and if the construction is not so commonly used that it has become a fixed combination, then it should be written as two words. An example is *xīn bǐ* 新笔 (new pen), which simply means “new pen,” or *dà chuán* 大船 (large + boat), which means “large boat.”

The first two types of adjective-noun constructions discussed above, those that must be written as one word, are listed in glossaries and dictionaries which deal with HP orthography (such

as A Hanyu Pinyin Vocabulary). Thus we may consult these reference works when we come across a construction we find difficult to judge.

Below are appended, for the student's reference, some more examples of adjective-noun constructions. Note which of them are written as one word and which as two.

1 + 1:

One word

Two words

dàndǎo 大脑 (large + brain, cerebrum); dà yú 大鱼 (big fish);  
dàlù 大陆 (large + land, continent); dà hé 大河 (large river);  
xiǎomài 小麦 (small + grain, wheat); xiǎo shù 小树 (small tree);  
xīnniáng 新娘 (new + girl, bride); xīn chē 新车 (new car);  
xīnnián 新年 (new + year, New Year); xīn xié 新鞋 (new shoes);  
lǎojiā 老家 (old + home, hometown); lǎo niú 老牛 (old cow);  
xiāngyān 香烟 (fragrant + cigarette, cigarette); xiāng huā 香花儿 (fragrant flower);  
rèxuè 热血 (hot + blood, ardor); rè shuǐ 热水 (hot water);  
huàidàn 坏蛋 (bad + egg, scoundrel); huài shū 坏书 (bad book);  
jiǎshān 假山 (false + mountain, ornamental hill); jiǎ huò 假货 (counterfeit goods).

Note that in some cases, the same adjective-noun construction written two different ways will convey two different meanings. For instance, xīnfáng 新房 (one word) means "bridal cham-

ber,” while *xīn fáng* (two words) means simply “new room.”

1 + 2:

One word

Two words

dàyuánshuài 大元帅 (large + dà lǎohǔ 大老虎 (big tiger);  
general, generalissimo);

dàdòngmài 大动脉 (large + dà yǎnjīng 大眼睛 (large  
artery, aorta); eyes);

xiǎoxíngxīng 小行星 (small + xiǎo lóufáng 小楼房 (small  
planet, minor planet, building);  
asteroid);

hóngbǎoshí 红宝石 (red + hóng wàzi 红袜子 (red socks);  
gem, ruby);

báixuèqiú 白血球 (white + bái pífu 白皮肤 (white skin).  
blood cell, white blood cell);

2 + 1:

One word

Two words

hútúchóng 糊涂虫 (muddled + hútu zhàng 糊涂帐 (mixed-up  
insect, blunderer); accounts);

qīngliángyóu 清凉油 (cool + cōngmíng rén 聪明人 (smart  
ointment, cooling ointment); person);

fāngbiànmìàn 方便面 (convenient + xīnxiān yú 新鲜鱼 (fresh fish).  
noodles, instant noodles);

There are not many examples of 2 + 1 form that should be written as one word.

2 + 2:

A two-syllable adjective followed by a two-syllable noun should always be written as two words. Moreover, the structural particle *de* 的 may be inserted between adjective and noun in such circumstances to reinforce their separateness. Thus “a happy life” may be equally well written *xìngfú shēnghuó* 幸福生活 or *xìngfú de shēnghuó* 幸福的生活; “an important question” may be written either *zhòngyào wèntí* 重要问题 or *zhòngyào de wèntí* 重要的问题.

#### 4) Numeral + noun

In this type of noun construction, the numeral component acts as the qualifier, modifying the noun component. This sort of construction is perhaps most common in forms of address used toward family members.

1 + 1: always written as one unit.

èr 二 (two) + gē 哥 (older brother) → èrgē (second oldest elder brother);

sān 三 (three) + mèi 妹 (younger sister) → sānmèi (third oldest younger sister);

liù 六 (six) + shū 叔 (father's younger brother) → liùshū 六叔 (sixth oldest younger brother of one's father);

sì 四 (four) + jì 季 (season) → sìjì 四季 (the four seasons);

bā 八 (eight) + guà 卦 (divinatory symbols) → bāguà 八卦 (the Eight Diagrams used in Chinese fortune-telling);

bàn 半 (half) + lù 路 (road) → bànlù 半路 (on the way);

wàn 万 (ten thousand) + suì 岁 (year, age) → wànsuì 万岁 (long live ...).

1 + 2; always written as one unit.

èr 二 (two) + xiǎojie 小姐 (young lady) → èrxiǎojie 二小姐  
(second daughter of a family);

sān 三 (three) + gūye 姑爷 (son-in-law) → sāngūye 三姑  
爷 (third son-in-law);

èr 二 (two) + fángdōng 房东 (landlord) → èrfángdōng 二  
房东 (second eldest landlord).

2 + 1; are always written as one word. This type of construction occurs fairly frequently. Most commonly, the two-syllable component is a construction containing a numeral rather than simply a numeral.

bāxiānzhuō 八仙桌 (Eight Immortals + table, table that can  
seat eight), bā 八 eight, xiān 仙 immortal;

liǎngmiànpài 两面派 (two faces + manner, double-dealer),  
liǎng 两 two, miàn 面 face;

bǎibǎoxiāng 百宝箱 (hundred treasures + chest, treasure chest),  
bǎi 百 hundred, bǎo 宝 treasure;

wànhuātǒng 万花筒 (ten thousand flowers + tube, kaleidoscope),  
wàn 万 ten thousand, huā 花 flower.

It should be noted that the numeral + measure word + noun construction so common in Putonghua (e.g. yí gè rén 一个人, one person, liǎng pǐ mǎ 两匹马, two horses) is an entirely different type of construction from the numeral + noun construction described here. See Chapter 4 below for a discussion of measure words.

### 5) Locational noun + noun

Locational nouns are a special subset of common nouns. (See Section 9 of this chapter for a detailed discussion of these words.) The rules for writing position word + noun constructions are basically the same as apply to noun + noun constructions, as discussed in Section 6 above.

1 + 1: always written as one unit.

shàng 上 (top) + shēn 身 (body) → shàngshēn 上身 (upper body);

wài 外 (outside) + guó 国 (country) → wàiguó 外国 (foreign country);

dōng 东 (east) + chéng 城 (city) → dōngchéng 东城 (the eastern part of a city);

qián 前 (front) + mén 门 (door) → qiánmén 前门 (front door);

yòu 右 (right) + shǒu 手 (hand) → yòushǒu 右手 (right hand).

1 + 2: always written as one unit.

shàng 上 (last) + xīngqī 星期 (week) → shàngxīngqī 上星期 (last week);

wài 外 (outside) + zǔmǔ 祖母 (grandmother) → wàizǔmǔ 外祖母 (maternal grandmother);

dōng 东 (east) + bānqiú 半球 (hemisphere) → dōngbānqiú 东半球 (the Eastern Hemisphere);

hòu 后 (back) + nǎodài 脑袋 (brain) → hòunǎodài 后脑袋

(hindbrain);

zuǒ 左 (left) + yǎnjīng 眼睛 (eye) → zuǒyǎnjīng 左眼睛  
(left eye).

2 + 1: always written as one word.

běifāng 北 方 (North) + huà 话 (speech) →

běifānghuà (the Northern dialect);

nánfāng 南 方 (South) + rén 人 (person) →

nánfāngrén (Southerner).

#### 6) Noun + measure word

This is a rather unusual form of the modifier—modified noun construction. The noun component here indicates a certain object, and the measure word that follows acts as the qualifier. This reverse construction indicates that the noun as a collective is meant, rather than a single specimen of that group. Nouns of this construction may thus be considered collective nouns. Noun + measure word constructions are always written as one word.

mǎ 马 (horse) + pǐ 匹 (measure word) → mǎpǐ 马匹  
(horses, horses in general);

zhǐ 纸 (paper) + zhāng 张 (measure word) → zhǐzhāng 纸张  
(paper, paper in general);

huā 花 (flower) + duǒ 朵 (measure word) → huāduǒ 花朵  
(flowers, flowers in general);

shū 书 (book) + běn 本 (measure word) → shūběn 书本  
(books, books in general);



chē 车 (car) + liàng 辆 (measure word) → chēliàng 车辆  
(cars, cars in general);  
qiāng 枪 (gun) + zhī 支 (measure word) → qiāngzhī 枪支  
(guns, guns in general).

We have looked at six types of modifier–modified noun constructions. There are many other types which we shall not discuss here, as they occur only rarely and in most cases present no difficulty in writing.

The rules governing orthography for nouns of modifier–modified construction may appear on first reading to be unreasonably complicated, but in actuality they may be reduced to two simple rules.

a) Constructions of the forms 1 + 1, 1 + 2, and 2 + 1 (called short constructions, as they do not exceed three syllables) are all to be written as one unit, with the important exception of adjective + noun constructions. This latter type of construction requires a measure of consideration, or recourse to a dictionary or lexicon in the case of particularly difficult constructions.

b) Constructions of the form 2 + 2 are always written as two words, in accordance with the principle of “pairs repel.” (All other forms not mentioned explicitly here are also to be written as more than one unit; consult Section 11 of this chapter for details.)

## 1.7 Nouns of Coordinate Construction

Nouns of coordinate construction are composed of two single-syllable words or morphemes of similar quality, set in a coordinate relationship (as “cats and dogs” or “night and day” in

English). Words of coordinate construction are the second most common type in Putonghua, outnumbered only by words of modifier-modified construction. Some nouns of coordinate construction are single words, while others are phrases composed of several words.

Nouns of coordinate construction may be divided into two types. The first type may be called the “chemically combined” type. The two components of such nouns combine to produce a compound whose meaning is somewhat or altogether different from the meaning of either component in isolation, much as the gases hydrogen and oxygen chemically combine to produce a liquid, water, with properties totally unlike that of either of its components. An example of this type of noun may be seen in the combination of *tú* 图 (picture) and *shū* 书 (book) to form *túshū* 图书, which does not mean “pictures and books” but is rather a general term for books (as used in *túshūguǎn* 图书馆, library). Again, *rén* 人 (person) and *wù* 物 (thing) combine to form *rénwù* 人物, which does not mean “people and things” but rather “character,” as the characters of a book or play. Another example: *lǐng* 领 (collar) and *xiù* 袖 (sleeve) combine to form *lǐngxiù* 领袖, which means “leader.” In *lǐngxiù* 领袖, the meaning of the compound is completely removed from the meanings of its component parts.

Coordinate nouns of the “chemically combined” type are always written as one unit. A few examples follow:

*guó* 国 (country) + *jiā* 家 (home) → *guójiā* 国家 (country);  
*chéng* 城 (city wall) + *shì* 市 (market) → *chéngshì* 城市

(city);

jīāng 江 (river) + shān 山 (mountain) → jiāngshān 江山  
(country);

gǔ 骨 (bone) + ròu 肉 (flesh) → gǔròu 骨肉 (kin, family);

fēng 风 (wind) + shuǐ 水 (water) → fēngshuǐ 风水  
(geomancy, the art of selecting auspicious sites for buildings  
and tombs);

máo 矛 (spear) + dùn 盾 (shield) → máodùn 矛盾 (con-  
tradiction);

xué 学 (to study) + wèn 问 (to ask) → xuéwèn 学问  
(learning, knowledge);

mǎi 买 (to buy) + mài 卖 (to sell) → mǎimài 买卖 (trans-  
action, deal);

chū 出 (to pay out) + nà 纳 (to take in) → chūnà 出纳 (tel-  
ler);

kāi 开 (to turn on) + guān 关 (to turn off) → kāiguān 开关  
(switch).

The second type of coordinate construction nouns may be called the “blended” type. In these nouns, the meaning of the whole is the sum of the meanings of its components. For example, shī 师 (teacher) and shēng 生 (student) combine to form a construction with the meaning “teacher and student”; fū 夫 (husband) and qī 妻 (wife) combine to mean “husband and wife”; jīn 今 (the present) and xī 昔 (the past) combine to mean “past and present.” As can be seen from these few examples, a common concept or fixed relationship forms the link between the two components. It should be pointed out that constructions of this

type are fairly conventionalized, so that it is not usually possible to make new ones up as one likes.

Another feature of these “blended” constructions is that their components, for the most part, cannot be used independently as words. That is, to take an example from above, *shī* 师 cannot stand alone as a word meaning “teacher,” but must be expanded into a two-syllable form, *lǎoshī* 老师; *shēng* 生 cannot stand by itself to mean “student,” but must be expanded into a two-syllable form, *xuésheng* 学生. For this reason, it is not appropriate to write the construction *shī shēng* composed of *shī* 师 and *shēng* 生 as two words *shī shēng*. On the other hand, it is equally unsatisfactory to write this construction as one word (*shīshēng*), as this might lead people to regard the construction as a single concept (like the “chemically combined” constructions described above), which it is not.

In order to express both the close relation between the components of a “blended” construction and the independent meaning of each, the best method is to choose a compromise solution and link the components with a hyphen.

The several varieties of the “blended” noun construction are examined below

1 + 1:

*shī* 师 (teacher) + *shēng* 生 (student) → *shī-shēng* 师生 (teacher and student);

*fū* 夫 (husband) + *qī* 妻 (wife) → *fū-qī* 夫妻 (husband and wife);

*mǔ* 母 (mother) + *nǚ* 女 (daughter) → *mǔ-nǚ* 母女 (mother and daughter);

chéng 城 (city) + xiāng 乡 (countryside) → chéng-xiāng  
城乡 (city and countryside);

jīn 今 (present) + xī 昔 (past) → jīn-xī 今昔 (past and present);

gōng 公 (public) + sī 私 (private) → gōng-sī 公私 (public and private);

mén 门 (door) + chuāng 窗 (window) → mén-chuāng 门窗 (door and windows);

gōng 弓 (bow) + jiàn 箭 (arrow) → gōng-jiàn 弓箭 (bow and arrows).

Note that certain constructions of this type exhibit different-meanings depending on whether they are written with a hyphen or without. For example:

a. shì-fēi 是非 (right and wrong):

Wǒmen yīdìng yào fēnqīng shì-fēi. 我们一定要分清是非.

(We must differentiate between right and wrong.)

shífēi 是非 (quarrel, dispute):

Tā zuì xǐhuān bānnòng shífēi. 她最喜欢搬弄是非.

(She loves to pick quarrels.)

b. mǎi-mài 买卖 (buying and selling):

Mǎi-mài shuāngfāng yīnggāi gōngpíng héli. 买卖双方应该公平合理.

(Both sides should be fair and reasonable when buying and selling.)

mǎimai 买卖 (deal, transaction);

Tā zuòle yī bǐ mǎimai. 他做了一笔买卖.

(He brought off a deal.)

Another advantage of the hyphen is clarity; it helps, for instance, to differentiate between gōng-sī 公私 (public and private) and gōngsī 公司 (company).

In Section 1.6 it was noted that 2 + 1 form nouns of modifier-modified construction are usually written as one word. If the 2 of such a construction is a blended coordinate noun like those described here, then the hyphen should be retained within the larger construction. An example is fù-mǔqīn 父母亲 (father and mother); also, sōng-bǎishù 松柏树 (pines and cypresses), and gōng-jǐànshǒu 弓箭手 (archer). The hyphen should likewise be retained if a coordinate construction appears as the modifying element in a 2 + 2 construction. Thus we see gōng-sī guānxì 公私关系 (relations between public and private institutions), and rén-jī duìhuà 人机对话 (dialogue between people and machines).

1 + 1 + 1:

Blended nouns of three components are written, like those of two components, with hyphens between the members. This form usually arises from the combination of three related words in abbreviated form.

shù-lǐ-huà 数理化, mathematics, physics, and chemistry  
(from shùxué + wùlǐ + huàxué);

gōng-nóng-bīng 工农兵, workers, peasants, and soldiers  
(from gōngrén + nóngmín + bīngshì);

lù-hǎi-kōng 陆海空, army, navy, and air force

(from lùjūn + hǎijūn + kōngjūn);

dé-zhì-tǐ 德智体, moral, intellectual and physical education

(from déyù + zhìyù + tǐyù).

Note that the hyphen is used only to link objects that are conventionally mentioned together. Nouns in an ordinary list should be separated by commas. Thus:

Yuànzǐ lǐ yǎngle hěnduō jī, yā, é. 院子里养了很多鸡、鸭、鹅。(They raised a lot of chickens, ducks, and geese in the yard.)

Zhànshìmen xiàng dōng, nán, xī sān gè fāngxiàng chōngle chūqu. 战士们向东、南、西三个方向冲了出去。(The soldiers charged out toward the east, south, and west.)

1 + 1 + 1 + 1:

Blended nouns of four components are similar to, but not to be confused with, chéngyǔ 成语 (idioms, for which see Chapter 10). The components of four-member blended nouns are separated by hyphens. Thus:

chūn-xià-qiū-dōng 春夏秋冬 (spring, summer, autumn and winter);

xǐ-nù-āi-lè 喜怒哀乐 (joy, anger, sorrow and merriment; the four emotions);

zhǐ-bǐ-mò-yàn 纸笔墨砚 (paper, brush, ink, and inkstone; the four tools of writing and painting);

guān-guǒ-gū-dú 鳏寡孤独 (widowers, widows, orphans

and the childless—people without family);

zhī-hū-zhě-yě 之乎者也 (four common function words of classical Chinese; used to describe pedantic or over-literary speech or writing).

As with the three-syllable constructions, the hyphen is only used to link series of four components that conventionally go together. Four objects in an ordinary list are separated by commas. Thus:

Shāngpō shàng zhòngle xǔduō táo, lǐ, méi, xìng.

山坡上种了许多桃、李、梅、杏。

(There are a lot of peach, plum, flowering plum and apricot trees planted on the hillside.)

The members of any series over four syllables in length are to be separated by commas, regardless of whether they form a conventional phrase or an ordinary list. Thus:

jīn, mù, shuǐ, huǒ, tǔ 金木水火土 (metal, wood, water, fire and earth — the five elements of traditional Chinese cosmology);

suān, tián, kǔ, là, má 酸甜苦辣麻 (sour, sweet, bitter, peppery and spicy—the five flavors of Chinese cuisine);

xīn, gān, pí, fèi, shèn 心肝脾肺肾 (heart, liver, spleen, lungs and kidneys);

chái, mǐ, yóu, yán, jiàng, cù, chá 柴米油盐酱醋茶

(firewood, rice, oil, salt, soy sauce, vinegar and tea—the seven daily necessities).



## 1.8 Nouns of Verb-Object and Subject-Predicate Construction

### Nouns of Verb-Object Construction

A verb and its object usually form part of a sentence, but they can also combine to form a noun. An example is the verb-object construction *guǎn jiā* 管家 (to take care of household affairs), which has come to be used as the noun meaning any person who performs such duties—a housekeeper. Once this verb-object construction becomes a noun, it must be written as one word, *guǎnjiā* 管家 (note that *jiā* is here downgraded to neutral tone).

Examples of verb-object noun constructions are relatively few, and easy to deal with in writing. They are always written as one unit.

*zhǔ* 主 (to direct) + *xí* 席 (seat) → *zhǔxí* 主席 (chairman);

*lǐ* 理 (to manage) + *shì* 事 (affairs) → *lǐshì* 理事 (director);

*lǐng* 领 (to lead) + *háng* 航 (ship) → *lǐngháng* 领航 (navigator);

*wéi* 围 (to go around) + *bó* 脖 (neck) → *wéibó* 围脖 (scarf);

*chuán* 传 (to pass on) + *qí* 奇 (something strange or wonderful) → *chuánqí* 传奇 (legend).

### Nouns of Subject-Predicate Construction

While subject and predicate usually appear as the two components of a simple sentence, they can also combine to form the

name of an object (or, less commonly, of a person or occupation). An example is *dì* 地 (earth) + *zhèn* 震 (to shake), a subject-predicate construction meaning “the earth shakes,” which is used as a noun in *dìzhèn* 地震 (earth quake). When it acts as a noun, it will be noted, the construction is written as one unit. Another example is *shuāng* 霜 (frost) + *jiàng* 降 (to descend), a simple sentence meaning “frost descends,” which also acts as the noun *shuāngjiàng* 霜降 (Frost’s Descent), one of the twenty-four divisions of the year in the traditional Chinese calendar. When the construction acts as a noun, it is written as one unit.

Nouns of subject-predicate construction occur only rarely; they are most commonly seen among the names of illnesses and symptoms used in medicine. When nouns of this type have syllable structures of 1 + 1 or 1 + 2, they are written as one unit.

*qì* 气 (breath) + *chuǎn* 喘 (to gasp) → *qìchuǎn* 气喘 (asthma);

*tóu* 头 (head) + *téng* 疼 (to ache) → *tóuténg* 头疼 (headache);

*nǎo* 脑 (brain) + *yìxùe* 溢血 (to hemorrhage) → *nǎoyìxùe* 脑溢血 (cerebral hemorrhage);

*dǎn* 胆 (gall) + *jiéshí* 结石 (to form stones) → *dǎnjiéshí* 胆结石 (gallstone);

When nouns of this type have the syllable structure 2 + 2, they are written as two words, according to the principle of “pairs repel.”

xīnlì 心力 (heart) + shuāijíé 衰竭 (to be exhausted) → xīnlì  
shuāijíé 心力衰竭 (heart failure);

dòngmài 动脉 (artery) + yìghuà 硬化 (to harden) →  
dòngmài yìghuà 动脉硬化 (hardening of the arteries).

## 1.9 Locational Nouns

Locational nouns are a special subgroup of common nouns that express meanings of location, or place. The basic locational nouns are monosyllabic:

dōng 东 (east),	nán 南 (south),
xī 西 (west),	běi 北 (north),
shàng 上 (top),	xià 下 (bottom),
zuǒ 左 (left),	yòu 右 (right),
nèi 内 (inside),	zhōng 中 (middle),
qián 前 (front),	hòu 后 (back),
lǐ 里 (inside),	wài 外 (outside),
jiān 间 (between),	páng 旁 (side).

Note: lǐ 里 and nèi 内 both mean “inside,” but are used in different contexts.

### 1) Locational nouns with prefixes and suffixes

The prefix yǐ (以-) added to locational noun indicates the boundaries of that location, as yǐdōng 以东 (to the east of), yǐshàng 以上 (above), yǐwài 以外 (outside, beyond).

The suffixes -biān (-边), -miàn (-面), and -tóu (-头) add no meaning of their own to the locational nouns they follow; their only purpose is to turn a one-syllable word into a two-syl-

lable one.

Locational nouns in combination with a prefix or suffix are always written as one unit. It is important to remember that not all locational nouns can combine with all prefixes or suffixes. The allowable combinations, as dictated by convention, are given below:

	<u>yǐ- (以-)</u>
dōng 东 (east)	yīdōng
nán 南 (south)	yínán
xī 西 (west)	yīxī
běi 北 (north)	yīběi
shàng 上 (top)	yīshàng
xià 下 (bottom)	yīxià
qián 前 (front)	yīqián
hòu 后 (back)	yīhòu
zuǒ 左 (left)	_____
yòu 右 (right)	_____
lǐ 里, nèi 内 (inside)	yīnèi
wài 外 (outside)	yīwài
páng 旁 (side)	_____

<u>-bian (-边)</u>	<u>-miàn (-面)</u>	<u>-tou (-头)</u>
dōngbian	dōngmiàn	dōngtou
nánbian	nánmiàn	nántou
xībian	xīmiàn	xītou
běibian	běimiàn	běitou
shàngbian	shàngmiàn	shàngtou
xiàbian	xiàmiàn	xiàtou

qiánbian	qiánmiàn	qiántou
hòubian	hòumiàn	hòutou
zuǎbian	zuǎmiàn	_____
yòubian	yòumiàn	_____
lǐbian	lǐmiàn	lǐtou
wàibian	wàimiàn	wàitou
pángbian	_____	_____

Notes: nèi (内) combines only with the prefix yǐ-, (以-) while lǐ (里) combines only with the three suffixes; thus the two are mutually complementary.

zhōng 中 (middle) does not combine with any of the affixes listed above. It can, however, combine with jiān 间 (between) to form zhōngjiān 中间 (between, among); in this compound, jiān (间) acts as a suffix much like -bian, -miàn or -tou.

The suffix -tou is more common in speech than in writing.

## 2) Coordinate compounds of locational nouns

Two locational nouns opposite in meaning can combine to form one word. As with other coordinate constructions (See Section 1.7), they may form a “chemical combination” or a “blend.” The meaning of a “chemical combination” is different from the sum of the meanings of its components, and the whole is written as one unit; the meaning of a “blend” is the sum of its component meanings, and is written with a hyphen between the two parts. The two varieties are compared below:

shàng 上 (top) + xià 下 (bottom)

shàngxià: used after a numeral, to indicate approximation.

E.g.:

Tā de niánlíng zài 40 suì shàngxià.

他的年龄在 40 岁上下。

(He's about forty years old.)

shàng—xià: means “top and bottom.” E.g.:

Zhè gēn mùtóu shàng—xià yíyàng cǒu.

这根木头上下一样粗。

(This log is the same thickness at top and bottom.)

zuǒ 左 (left) + yòu 右 (right)

zuǒyòu: used after a numeral, to indicate approximation.

E.g.:

Wǒ de jiā lí Běijīng yǒu 200 lǐ zuǒyòu.

我的家离北京有 200 里左右

(My home is about two hundred li from Beijing.)

zuǒ—yòu: means “left and right.” E.g.:

Wǒ jiā de zuǒ—yòu dōu zhòngle hěn duō huā.

我家的左右都种了很多花儿。

(There are many flowers planted to the left and right of my house.)

qián 前 (front) + hòu 后 (back)

qiánhòu: used after a noun expressing time, to indicated approximation. E.g.:

Wǒ dǎsuan zài Yuándàn qiánhòu líkāi Běijīng.

我打算在元旦前后离开北京。

(I plan to leave Beijing around New Year's Day.)

qián-hòu: means “front and back.” E.g.:

Xuéxiào de qián-hòu gè yǒu yī dào dà mén.

学校的前后各有一道大门

(There is a large gate at the front and at the back of the school.)

The nouns dōng 东 (east), nán 南 (south), xī 西 (west) and běi 北 (north) can combine to form the words for the intermediate directions. These forms are written as one unit, without a hyphen.

dōngběi 东北 (northeast)

dōngnán 东南 (southeast)

xīběi 西北 (northwest)

xīnán 西南 (southwest)

Note that the order of combination in these words is exactly the reverse of English; that is, “northeast” is not běi 北 (north) + dōng 东 (east), but dōng 东 (east) + běi 北 (north), dōngběi 东北.

If two different directions are indicated, or if a line of motion from one point of the compass to another is meant, then a hyphen is used to separate the two, thus:

Zhè zuò chéngshì hěn dà, dōng-xī xiāngjù 15 lǐ, nán-běi xiāngjù 20 lǐ. 这座城市很大,东西相距 15 里,南北相距 20 里。

(This is a very large city; it is fifteen miles wide from east to west and twenty miles from north to south.)

### 3) Noun followed by locational noun

Constructions composed of an ordinary noun followed by a locational noun occur frequently in Putonghua. The general rule of word separation here is to write these constructions as two units.

1 + 1:

shān 山 (mountain) + shàng 上 (top) → shān shàng 山上  
(on the mountain);

shù 树 (tree) + xià 下 (bottom) → shù xià 树下 (under the tree);

wǎn 碗 (bowl) + lǐ 里 (inside) → wǎn lǐ 碗里 (in the bowl).

1 + 2:

shān 山 (mountain) + shàngmiàn 上面 (top) → shān shàngmiàn 山上面 (on the mountain);

hé 河 (river) + lǐmiàn 里面 (inside) → hé lǐmiàn 河里面 (in the river);

chéng 城 (city) + zhōngjiān 中间 (middle) → chéng zhōngjiān 城中间 (in the middle of the city).

2 + 1:

huǒchē 火车 (train) + shàng 上 (top) → huǒchē shàng 火车上 (on the train);

wūzi 屋子 (room) + lǐ 里 (inside) → wūzi lǐ 屋子里 (in the



room);

xuéxiào 学校 (school) + wài 外 (outside) → xuéxiào wài  
学校外 (outside the school).

2 + 2:

yuànzi 院子 (courtyard) + lǐbian 里边 (inside) → yuànzi  
lǐbian 院子里边 (in the courtyard);

gōngchǎng 工厂 (factory) + hòutou 后头 (back) →  
gōngchǎng hòutou 工厂后头 (behind the factory);

sān tiān 三天 (three days) + yǐnèi 以内 (inside) → sān tiān  
yǐnèi 三天以内 (within three days).

There are, however, many examples of this type of construction, especially of the form 1 + 1, which because of the close relations between the components must be written as one unit. Exactly which ones must be so written is one of the great problems of HP orthography. Generally speaking, the constructions which should be written as one unit may be divided into two types, as follows.

The first type is composed of those constructions in which the locational component has lost its original meaning. An example of this type is jiālǐ 家里 (home, at home), in which the original meaning of lǐ 里, “inside,” does not figure. All such constructions are written as one unit. There are also some more extreme examples in which not only the locational component but also the noun component has lost its original meaning. Some examples of this type are: tiānxià 天下 (literally “under the sky”: the world)

and mǎshàng 马上 (literally “on the horse”: immediately). All compounds of this type are written as one unit.

The second type of noun + locational construction that must be written as one word is that in which each component retains its original meaning, but which through repeated usage and association has come to be regarded as one word. Guówài 国外 (abroad, foreign), for example, retains its component meanings of “country” and “outside”; kōngzhōng 空中 (in the sky) similarly retains its component meanings of “air” and “in the middle.” Because of their frequent usage, these constructions have come to be regarded as one word; they are therefore written as a single unit.

The two types of construction mentioned here are sometimes hard to distinguish from each other in practice, but both alike are to be written as one unit. They may be found in any orthographic dictionary or lexicon of Putonghua, so in cases of uncertainty one can let the dictionary decide. As the dictionary only takes in single words, not phrases, any construction listed in the dictionary is to be written as one unit; any construction not listed is to be written as two or more units. Below, for the student’s reference, are given a few of most common single-word constructions of this type.

shàng 上 (top, on):

tiānshang 天上 (in the sky),

dìshang 地上 (on the ground),

hǎishang 海上 (at sea),

lùshang 路上 (on the road, en route),

shēnshang 身上 (on one’s person),

zǎoshang 早上 (morning),

wǎnshang 晚上 (evening),	mǎshàng 马上 (immediately).
xià 下 (bottom, under):	
tiānxià 天下 (the world),	dìxià 地下 (secret,
	clandestine),
shǒuxià 手下 (at hand,	xiāngxià 乡下 (countryside),
to hand),	
dìxià 底下 (underneath),	ménxià 门下 (disciple, adher-
	ent),
yǎnxià 眼下 (at present),	bǐxià 笔下 (writing ability).
qián 前 (front, before):	
miàncián 面前 (facing),	mùqián 目前 (at present),
shìqián 事前 (beforehand),	wǔqián 午前 (morning).
hòu 后 (back, after):	
bèihòu 背后 (behind	jīnhòu 今后 (from now on),
one's back),	
mùhòu 幕后 (behind	rìhòu 日后 (in future),
the scenes),	
shìhòu 事后 (afterwards),	wǔhòu 午后 (afternoon).
lǐ 里 (inside, in):	
jiālǐ 家里 (home),	xīnlǐ 心里 (in one's heart),
yèlǐ 夜里 (in the night).	
wàiwài 外 (outside):	
* guówài 国外 (abroad),	hǎiwài 海外 (overseas),
jiāowài 郊外 (outskirts of	lìwài 例外 (exception),
a city),	
yěwài 野外 (open country),	shìwài 室外 (outdoors).
nèi 内 (inside):	
guónèi 国内 (domestic,	hǎinèi 海内 (inside China),

internal),

fènnèi 分内 (one's duty),      shìnnèi 室内 (indoors).

zhōng 中 (middle);

xīnzhōng 心中 (in one's heart),      kōngzhōng 空中 (in the air).

\* Note that while guówài (国外) is written as one word, the analogous forms shěng wài 省外 (outside the province), xiàn wài 县外 (outside the county) and qū wài 区外 (outside the district) are all written as two words. The same is true of guónèi 国内 (domestic) and its analogous forms.

### 1.10 Nouns of Time

Nouns of time, like locational nouns, are a special subcategory of common nouns. One noteworthy characteristic of this subclass is that nouns of time often serve as adverbs or adverbial components in sentences, such as jīntiān 今天 (today) in "Tā jīntiān zài jiāli xiūxi." 他今天在家里休息。 (He's taking the day off at home today). In this section, we will discuss some of the more important types of nouns of time and their orthography.

#### 1) Year, month, day and day of the week

The twelve months of the year are expressed in Putonghua by one of the numerals from 1 to 12, followed by yuè 月 (month). Each month is written as a single unit, with the first letter capitalized:

Yīyuè 一月 (or Zhēngyuè 正月, Yuányuè 元月, January);  
Èryuè 二月 (February); Sānyuè 三月 (March); Sìyuè 四月

(April); Wǔyuè 五月 (May); Liùyuè 六月 (June); Qīyuè 七月 (July); Bāyuè 八月 (August); Jiǔyuè 九月 (September); Shíyuè 十月 (October); Shí'yíyuè 十一月 (November); Shí'èryuè 十二月 (December).

The days of the week are expressed by the word xīngqī 星期 or zhōu 周 (both meaning "week"), followed by one of the numerals from 1 to 6 for Monday to Saturday, and by the word rì 日 or tiān 天 (day) for Sunday. Each is written as one unit, with the first letter capitalized:

Xīngqīrì 星期日 (or Xīngqītiān 星期天, Sunday); Xīngqīyī 星期一 (Monday); Xīngqī'èr 星期二 (Tuesday); Xīngqīsān 星期三 (Wednesday); Xīngqīsì 星期四 (Thursday); Xīngqīwǔ 星期五 (Friday); Xīngqīliù 星期六 (Saturday).

The days of the month are expressed by one of the numerals from 1 to 31, followed by rì 日 (day) or hào 号 (number). In each case, the numeral is written separately from rì 日 or hào 号. Thus we have yī rì 一日 or yī hào 一号 (the first of the month), èr rì 二日 or èr hào 二号 (the second), sān rì 三日 or sān hào 三号 (the third), and so on. Another option for the first ten days of each month is to add the prefix chū- 初- (beginning) to the numeral, in which case the whole is written as one unit: chūyī 初一 (the first), chū'èr 初二 (the second), ... chūshí 初十 (the tenth). This form is used only in connection with the lunar Chinese calendar, however.

The correct written forms for year, month, day and day of the week are as follows, using Wednesday, March 9, 1988 as an example:

1988 nián Sānyuè jiǔ rì (Xīngqīsān) 一九八八年三月九日 (星

期三)

1988 nián 3 yuè 9 rì (Xīngqī 3) 1988 年 3 月 9 日 (星期三)

1988 n. 3 y. 9 r. (Xīngqī 3)

The written forms for expressing years and days of the recent past, the present, and the near future are as follows:

nián 年 (year)

dàqiánnián 大前年

(three years ago)

qiánnián 前年

(two years ago)

qùnián 去年

(last year)

jīnnián 今年

(this year)

míngnián 明年

(next year)

hòunián 后年

(two years from now)

dàhòunián 大后年

(three years from now)

tiān 天 (day)

dàqiántiān 大前天

(three days ago)

qiántiān 前天

(two days ago)

zuótiān 昨天

(yesterday)

jīntiān 今天

(today)

míngtiān 明天

(tomorrow)

hòutiān 后天

(two days from now)

dàhòutiān 大后天

(three days from now)

There is a similar system for expressing weeks and months in relation to the present one:

yuè 月 (month)

shàngyuè 上月

(last month)

xīngqī 星期 (week)

shàngxīngqī 上星期

(last week)

běnyuè 本月, zhège yuè 这个月 (this month)	běnxīngqī 本星期, zhège xīngqī 这个星期 (this week)
xiàyuè 下月 (next month)	xiàxīngqī 下星期 (next week)

Names of holidays are proper nouns and so belong rather in the next chapter, but it may be noted here in passing that they are always written as one unit, with the first letter capitalized: Guóqīngjié 国庆节 (National Day), Yuándòngjié 元旦节 (New Year's Day), Chūnjié 春节 (Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year), Értóngjié 儿童节 (Children's Day), Qīngmíngjié 清明节 (Pure Bright Festival).

## 2) Divisions of the day

The day is divided into the following parts, each of which is written as one unit:

zǎoshang 早上 (early morn- ing),	shàngwǔ 上午 (morning),
zhōngwǔ 中午 (noon),	xiàwǔ 下午 (afternoon),
wǎnshang 晚上 (evening),	shàngbànyè 上半夜 (first half of the night),
bànyè 半夜 (midnight),	xiàbànyè 下半夜 (second half of the night).

There are two ways of referring to the units of hour, minute and second; one is used when referring to the unit itself, and the other is used when actually telling time. This is analogous to Eng-

lish usage, where a unit of sixty minutes is called “hour” but is referred to as “o’clock” in phrases like “eight o’clock.”

<u>unit of time</u>	<u>as used in telling time</u>
xiǎoshí 小时 (hour)	diǎn 点 (hour)
kèzhōng 刻钟 (quarter hour)	kè 刻 (quarter hour)
fēnzhōng 分钟 (minute)	fēn 分 (minute)
miǎozhōng 秒钟 (second)	miǎo 秒 (second)

The word zhōngtóu 钟头 rather than xiǎoshí 小时 is often used in speech to signify “hour”, thus: sān gè zhōngtóu 三个钟头 (three hours). The other units of time are expressed as follows: sān kèzhōng 三刻钟 (three quarters of an hour), èrshí fēnzhōng 二十分钟 (twenty minutes), wǔshí miǎozhōng 五十秒钟 (fifty seconds).

In telling time, the following forms are used (taking 8:20:48 as an example):

bā diǎn, èrshí fēn, sìshí/bā miǎo 八点二十分四十八秒  
(commas are optional; they are used here for clarity)

or 8 diǎn 20 fēn 48 miǎo.

(using 3:15 PM as an example):

xiàwǔ sān diǎn yī kè 下午三点一刻

or xiàwǔ 3 diǎn 1 kè



The half hour is usually expressed using the numeral *bàn* 半 (half), as in: 8 diǎn bàn 八点半 (8:30). The number of minutes past the hour is expressed using *guò* 过 (past), as in: 8 diǎn guò 5 fēn 八点过五分 (same as 8 diǎn 5 fēn 八点五分, 5 minutes past 8:00). The number of minutes before the hour is expressed using *chà* 差 (to lack), as in: 8 diǎn chà 5 fēn 八点差五分 (same as 7 diǎn 55 fēn 七点五十五分, 5 minutes to 8:00).

### 1.11 Noun Phrases that Express a Single Concept

A noun, by definition, expresses the concept of a person or thing. Not every person or thing, however, can be expressed by a single noun. Complex concepts, in particular, are often expressed by two or more words linked together in a phrase. Noun phrases of this type, which express a single concept in several words, present an important problem for HP orthography.

A simple example of this type of noun phrase is *bǎihuò gōngsī* 百货公司 (department store), a single concept acting as a noun which is nonetheless made up of two smaller nouns, *bǎihuò* 百货 (general merchandise) and *gōngsī* 公司 (company). A slightly different example is seen in *wúguǐ diànchē* 无轨电车 (trackless trolley), made up of two components, *wúguǐ* 无轨 (trackless) and *diànchē* 电车 (trolley). *Wúguǐ* 无轨, a semi-dependent word, cannot stand on its own, while *diànchē* 电车 is independent.

Some people have advocated writing phrases such as these as single units, since, they express single concepts. This principle, however, if carried to its logical extreme, would produce written forms of in tolerable length, unwieldy and difficult to interpret. Consider for example the single concept “*duōdàntóu fēndǎo*

chóngfǎn dàqícéng yùnzài huǒjiàn”多弹头分导重返大气层运载火箭 (multiple independently targeted reentry carrier rocket); should it be written as one unit, with no breaks, it would be a daunting thing to come across in reading.

Noun phrases that express a single concept are therefore best dealt with by dividing them into smaller words in writing. Although some of the phrase components (called yǔjié 语节, or “speech sections”) separated out by this method will not be truly independent words (e.g. wúguǐ 无轨 (trackless), duōdàn tóu 多弹头 (multiple warhead)), it is still better on the whole to make the compromise and write them separately. The general rule is that any word of over three syllables (excepting those formed through prefixing and suffixing) is to be split up into yǔjié 语节 in writing. Most yǔjié 语节 are two syllables in length; yǔjié 语节 of three syllables are also not uncommon.

Below are given examples of the various types of noun phrases, along with their written forms:

**Four-syllable noun phrases:** Most phrases of this form can be split up into two two-syllable components, and are usually of modifier-modified construction. E.g.:

gōng rén jiē jí 工人阶级 (the working class), gōng rén 工人 (worker) and jiē jí 阶级 (class) are both independent words;

bǎi kē quán shū 百科全书 (encyclopedia), neither bǎi kē 百科 (“hundred disciplines”) nor quán shū 全书 (“entire book”) are independent words;

yǒu jī huà xué 有机化学 (organic chemistry), yǒu jī 有机 (organic) is not an independent word;

bǎi wàn fù wēng 百万富翁 (millionaire); bǎi wàn 百万

(million) is not an independent word;

kēxué jìshù 科学技术 (science and technology), kēxué 科学 (science) and jìshù 技术 (technology) form a coordinate construction.

In some cases, the first two syllables of the 2 + 2 form are a construction requiring a hyphen:

shī-shēng guānxì 师生关系 (student-teacher relationship);  
hēi-bái diànshì 黑白电视 (black-and-white television);

In other cases, the first two syllables of the 2+2 form must be separated into two single-syllable words to produce a 1+1+2 form:

sān dà liúyù 三大流域 (the three great river basins—Yangtze, Yellow, and Pearl),

sān 三 (three) and dà 大 (large) do not form a unit;

sì dà jīngāng 四大金刚 (the four warrior attendants of the Buddha), sì 四 (four) and dà 大 (large) do not form a unit.

**Five-syllable noun phrases:** These are most commonly divided into either 3 + 2 or 2 + 3.

3 + 2:

jiàngluòsǎn bùduì 降落伞部队 (paratroopers);

guòmǐnxìng fǎnyìng 过敏性反应 (allergic reaction);

bùpíngděng tiáoyuē 不平等条约 (unequal treaty),  
bùpíngděng 不平等 (unequal) should be written as one unit;  
fēizhèngyì zhànzhēng 非正义战争 (unjust war).

2 + 3:

gāoděng jiàoyùbù 高等教育部 (Ministry of Higher Education);

gāoshè jīguānqiāng 高射机关枪 (antiaircraft machine gun),

gāoshè 高射 is not an independent word;

yuánzǐ wùlǐxué 原子物理学 (atomic physics);

jiànshè wěiyuánhui 建设委员会 (construction committee).

Certain noun phrases of the form (2 + 2) + 1 are easily mistaken for 2 + (2 + 1), that is, for 2 + 3. The student must be attentive to these, for differences in written form will often produce differences in meaning. For example:

gōnggòng qìchē zhàn 公共汽车站 (public bus stop, or stop for public buses), must not be written “gōnggòng qìchēzhàn,” (bus stop for the public);

wàiguó wénxué xì 外国文学系 (department of foreign literature), as opposed to wàiguó wénxué, a department of literature in a foreign country.

**Six-syllable noun phrases:** These are almost always of the form 2 + 2 + 2:

rénmín dàibiǎo dàhuì 人民代表大会 (people's congress);

shuāngcéng gōnggòng qìchē 双层公共汽车 (double-decker bus);

zhòngdiǎn bǎohù wénwù 重点保护文物 (special preservation

of historical relics).

Noun phrases of seven or more syllables may be worked out by analogy with the principles outlined above.

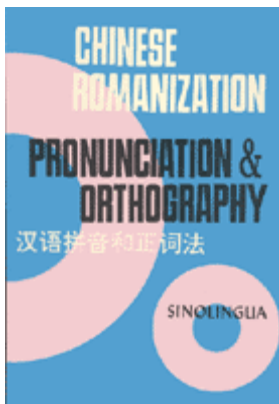
## 2. Proper Nouns

### 2.1 Introduction

Proper nouns are those words which represent the names of individual people, places, nations, ethnic groups, and other such specific referents. HP follows the example of most other Latin-alphabet writing systems in using capital letters to denote the beginning of each word in a proper noun.

Aside from the use of capital letters, the written form of proper nouns differs in many other ways from that of common nouns. It is for this reason that we here devote a separate chapter to the topic of proper nouns. Firstly, a proper noun functions as a unitary symbol, referring to a specific person, place or thing. Thus there is no need to analyze the word structure of a proper noun when considering how to write it in HP. (For philological purposes, of course, it is still possible to so analyze them; but for ordinary purposes of usage it is unnecessary.) It is unnecessary, for instance, to analyze the name Chóngchūn 长春 (a city in Jilin Province, China) into cháng 长 (long) and chūn 春 (spring), or to break up Yìxiàntiān 一线天 (“A Thread of Sky” — a scenic spot in Hangzhou) into yī 一 (one), xiàn 线 (thread), and tiān 天 (sky). Similarly, personal names need not be analyzed into their com-

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