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About the Author

Hello and welcome! My name is Jimmy. I was born and raised in Hong Kong, a small but endlessly vibrant city where Cantonese is the language of the street, the dinner table, and the heart. These days I live in Bangkok, Thailand, where I work in the aviation industry — but Hong Kong, and the Cantonese language, will always be home to me.

I have always loved to travel. There is nothing I enjoy more than standing somewhere completely new, map in hand (or phone battery dying), trying to figure out how the locals say 'thank you'. I have a long list of places I dream of visiting — Antarctica is at the very top, because I want to stand on the last true wilderness on Earth and see the emperor penguins for myself. Right behind it is the vast, dramatic west of China — Xinjiang, Tibet, and the Silk Road cities — landscapes that look like nothing else on the planet.

Closer to home, I am also slowly working my way around Thailand, from the northern hills of Chiang Rai to the southern islands. I have made myself a promise, though: before I go much further, I want to properly learn Thai, so that I can travel not just as a tourist looking at Thailand, but as someone who can actually talk to it.

This book was born from a simple idea. Every time I meet someone who wants to visit Hong Kong, or who is simply curious about Cantonese, I find myself scribbling down the same phrases, the same tone tricks, the same warnings about elevator etiquette and dim sum ordering. So I decided to finally write it all down properly — tones, vowels, greetings, useful conversations for sightseeing, restaurants, transport, hospitals, temples, markets, cinemas, and emergencies, plus a good dose of Hong Kong slang, culture, and the kind of do's and don'ts that only locals usually know.

Whether you are preparing for a trip to Hong Kong, dating someone from Hong Kong, working with Cantonese-speaking colleagues, or just fascinated by one of the world's most expressive languages, I hope this book makes the journey easier — and a lot more fun. Learning a language is really just learning to belong somewhere a little more. So — 一齊嚟學廣東話啦! (jat1 cai4 lai4 hok6 gwong2 dung1 waa2 laa1!) Let's learn Cantonese together!

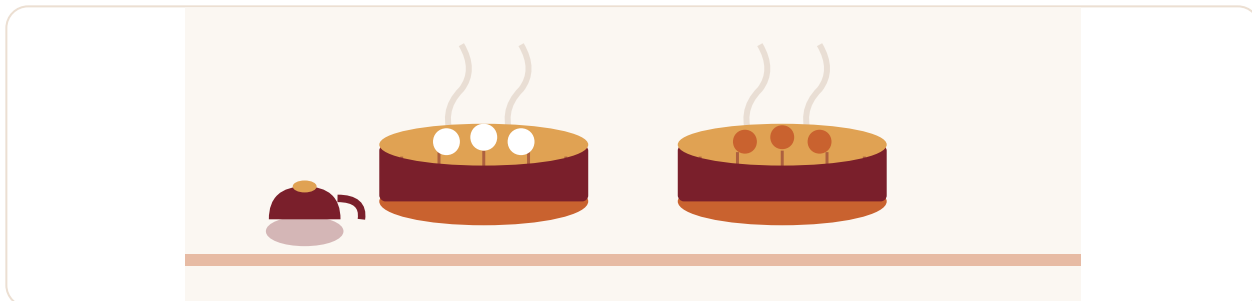
The Six Tones of Cantonese

Cantonese is a tonal language with six distinct tones (historically nine, but three are duplicates used only for certain checked syllables, so learners focus on six). The same syllable pronounced with a different tone becomes a completely different word. This is the single most important — and most fun — thing to master in Cantonese.

Take a look at the six example characters below — 三 (sam1), 展 (zin2), 見 (gin3), 年 (ngo4), 好 (hou5), and 地 (dei6). Each one carries a different tone, and getting the pitch right is what separates a native-sounding phrase from a confusing one. Don't worry — with a little practice, your ear adjusts quickly.

#	Tone Name	Description	Example	Jyutping	Meaning
1	High Level	high, flat, like singing a high steady note	三	sam1	three
2	High Rising	starts mid, rises sharply — like asking 'huh?'	展	zin2	to extend / unfold
3	Mid Level	flat, mid-pitch, no rise or fall	見	gin3	to see
4	Low Falling	starts low, drops even lower — the 'sigh' tone	年	ngo4	year
5	Low Rising	starts low, rises to mid — gentle upward curve	好	hou5	good
6	Low Level	low, flat, heavy and steady — the 'bass note'	地	dei6	land / earth

At the Restaurant



Hong Kong is one of the world's great food cities. From dim sum brunches to late-night cha chaan teng (tea restaurants), here's how to order like a pro.

唔該，幾多位？ m4 goi1, gei2 do1 wai2? (Staff) Excuse me, how many people?

我哋四個人 ngo5 dei6 sei3 go3 jan4 There are four of us

唔該畀個餐牌我 m4 goi1 bei2 go3 caan1 paai2 ngo5 Please give me a menu

呢個係咩嚟㗎？ ni1 go3 hai6 me1 lei4 gaa3? What is this?

我想要呢個 ngo5 soeng2 jiu3 ni1 go3 I would like this one

唔該，一盅兩件 m4 goi1, jat1 zung1 loeng5 gin2 One pot of tea and two dim sum dishes,
please (classic dim sum order)

少少辣，唔該 siu2 siu2 laat6, m4 goi1 A little spicy, please

唔要辣 m4 jiu3 laat6 No spicy, please

我食素 ngo5 sik6 sou3 I am vegetarian

我對花生敏感 ngo5 deoi3 faa1 sang1 man5 gam2 I am allergic to peanuts

Hong Kong Slang & Funny Facts

加油！

正呀！

This is the fun part. Hong Kong Cantonese is famous for its playful slang, English loanwords, and street humour. Use these carefully (and with a smile) — some are casual enough for close friends only!

MK仔/MK妹 em1 kei1 zai2 / em1 kei1 mui1

'Mong Kok boy/girl' — slang for a flashy, trend-obsessed youth (named after the Mong Kok district)

屈機 wat1 gei1

'Overpowered' — originally gaming slang for something unbeatable, now used for anything impressively dominant

求其 kau4 kei4

Whatever / careless / just pick anything

唔拖唔水 m4 to1 m4 sei2

Literally 'neither drag nor water' — awkward, neither one thing nor the other

食檸檬 sik6 ning4 mung1

Literally 'eat a lemon' — to be rejected (especially romantically)

食花生 sik6 faa1 sang1

Literally 'eat peanuts' — to watch drama unfold as a bystander, like eating popcorn at a show
