How to Type Chinese on Computers

There are many ways to input Chinese characters on English language computers. This handout will only address one method: using pinyin romanization to input simplified Chinese characters. Pinyin and simplified Chinese characters are what is usually taught in college Standard Chinese language classes.

Input Method Editors (IME) are usually needed to type Chinese characters on computers. The Internet has some free IMEs that may be used without the need to install additional software or set up. These Web-based IMEs will require the Chinese words to be typed out on the online IME program, then copied and pasted onto a word processor (e.g. MS Word). Below are a couple free Web-based IMEs that I have found useful:

  - has only pinyin and simplified characters.
- [http://www.mdbg.net/chinden/webime_select.php](http://www.mdbg.net/chinden/webime_select.php)
  - offers a choice of different input methods as well as simplified and traditional character forms.

**Microsoft Windows 7** has a built in IME that may be used, though it requires activation and set up. The following directions will take you step-by-step through the process of setting up the Chinese IME in Windows 7.

1. Click on the Start Menu icon (lower left corner).
2. Type the word language in the search box (**do not press the enter key**! — the search results will automatically change as you type in your search term).
3. Click **Change keyboards or other input methods**.
4. When the window pops up, make sure you’re on the **Keyboards and Language** tab.
5. Click **Change keyboards** button.

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6. Click **Add** button.

7. Scroll down and expand **Chinese (Simplified, PRC)**

8. Select **Chinese (Simplified) - Microsoft Pinyin**

9. New Experience Input Style

10. Click **OK** on all three windows to apply your changes until you are out of the program.

11. Once your changes have been applied, you should see a tiny **EN** icon on your task tray on the lower right corner.

12. Click on the **EN** to get the pop-up menu.

13. Click on **Show the Language Bar**. **NOTE**: The bar will show up somewhere on the screen (usually on the upper right corner). Look for it.

14. Click on the **EN English (United States)** to get a drop-down menu and check the option for **CH Chinese (Simplified, PRC)**.

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14. Make sure the **Input Style** is **New Experience Input Style**.

15. Make sure the **Input Mode** has this Chinese character: 中 (it stands for Chinese input). If it has 英, it means it's still on English letter input and you won't be able to type Chinese.

16. In MS Word, make sure all the options are set correctly. When you type in the pinyin in the document, the Chinese words will appear.

   A. If you type in a single pinyin word and the Chinese character you want does not show up, then click on the forward arrow at the end of the list to get more Chinese characters with the same pinyin pronunciation.

   B. When you find the character you want, choose the number you want (use your keyboard) and the character will appear in your document.

   C. **Tip**: the IME can find well-established phrases (see example above), so you can try typing in phrases and see if the IME has it—it can save you some time.

17. If the IME doesn't work properly or cannot be set up properly, then use one of the free Web-based IMEs listed at the beginning of the document. 😊