S3 Putonghua Practice Paper: Initials, Finals and Tones, Pinyin Spelling Rules, Neutral Tone and Erhua, Vocabulary and Measure Words, Reading Aloud and Intonation, Listening and Speaking

S3 | Putonghua | Time: 60 minutes | Total: 100 marks | 24 questions

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Part A - Initials, Finals and Tones (17 marks)

Show working in question 1; answer the rest in Hanyu Pinyin with clear tone marks.

1. A reading passage has 120 syllables and Ming reads it in 1.5 minutes. Find his reading speed in syllables per minute and the time needed to read 300 syllables at the same speed. [5]

Answer: Answer: speed = 180 / 1.5 = 120 syllables per minute; time for 300 syllables = 300 / 120 = 2.5 minutes (2 minutes 30 seconds).

2. Write the four tones of the syllable ma (first, second, third and fourth tone) with tone marks, and state the common change of a third tone in connected speech. [4]

Answer: Answer: mā (first), má (second), mǎ (third), mà (fourth). When two third tones meet, the first becomes a second tone, e.g. nǐ hǎo is read as ní hǎo.

3. Distinguish aspirated and unaspirated initials: give one minimal pair each for b and p, d and t, g and k, and explain how aspiration changes meaning. [4]

Answer: Answer: b/p as in bà (dad) and pà (fear); d/t as in dà (big) and tà (step on); g/k as in gē (elder brother) and kē (subject). Aspiration is phonemic, so mixing them up produces a different word.

4. List the six simple finals and explain how ü is written after j, q and x. [4]

Answer: Answer: the simple finals are a, o, e, i, u and ü. After j, q and x the two dots are dropped and it is written ju, qu, xu (still pronounced ü), e.g. jū, qù, xū.

Part B - Pinyin Spelling Rules (17 marks)

Answer according to the Hanyu Pinyin spelling rules, paying attention to abbreviated forms and tone-mark placement.

5. Write the abbreviated forms of iou, uei and uen after an initial and give one common word for each. [5]

Answer: Answer: iou is written iu (liù, six); uei is written ui (guì, expensive); uen is written un (lùn, discuss). With no initial they are written yōu, wēi, wēn.

6. Write the sentence wǒmen yìqǐ qù xuéxiào in correctly word-divided pinyin and count the total number of syllables. [4]

Answer: Answer: wǒmen (2 syllables), yìqǐ (2), qù (1), xuéxiào (2), 7 syllables in total. Syllables of one word are joined; words are separated by spaces.

7. State the rule for placing tone marks and say which letter carries the mark in liu, gui and xue. [4]

Answer: Answer: the mark goes on the first vowel in the order a, o, e, i, u, ü; for iu and ui it goes on the second vowel. So liù takes the mark on u, guì on i, xuě on e.

8. Explain when y and w are used in Hanyu Pinyin and give two examples of each. [4]

Answer: Answer: for syllables with no initial that begin with i, u or ü, y or w is used: add y before i (yi, yin), add w before u (wu, wo), and write y before ü with the dots dropped (yu, yue).

Part C - Neutral Tone and Erhua (17 marks)

The neutral tone carries no tone mark; erhua adds r to the syllable and may change the meaning.

9. Give three common words with a neutral tone and explain how the neutral tone is shown in pinyin. [5]

Answer: Answer: māma (mother), zhuōzi (table), dōngxi (thing). A neutral-tone syllable takes no tone mark and is read short and light.

10. Explain how erhua is written, give the pinyin of huār and yìdiǎnr, and state two functions of erhua. [4]

Answer: Answer: erhua adds r to the syllable, written huār and yìdiǎnr. Functions: (1) it marks something small or affectionate, and (2) it distinguishes meaning or word class, as in tóu (head) and tóur (the person in charge).

11. In a 200-syllable script, 12% of the syllables are in the neutral tone. Find the number of neutral-tone syllables. [4]

Answer: Answer: 200 x 12% = 24 neutral-tone syllables (12% = 0.12).

12. Compare the pronunciation and meaning of mǎimài and mǎimai, and explain how the neutral tone changes the meaning. [4]

Answer: Answer: mǎimài (buying and selling as an activity) keeps full tones on both syllables; mǎimai, with a neutral second syllable, means business or trade, as in doing business.

Part D - Vocabulary and Measure Words (17 marks)

Use the correct measure word for each noun; in the Cantonese-Putonghua items give the Putonghua wording.

13. Give the correct measure word for each noun: shoes, umbrella, fish, paper (write one + measure word + noun for each). [5]

Answer: Answer: yì shuāng xié (a pair of shoes), yì bǎ sǎn (an umbrella), yì tiáo yú (a fish), yì zhāng zhǐ (a sheet of paper).

14. Distinguish the use of hūrán and tūrán and make one sentence with each. [4]

Answer: Answer: hūrán is an adverb used only as an adverbial (he suddenly stood up); tūrán is an adjective that can be adverbial, predicative or attributive (the matter was very sudden; a sudden change).

15. A stationery shop buys 5 dozen pencils at 12 pencils per dozen and shares them equally among 8 students. Find the total number of pencils, the number each student gets and the remainder. [4]

Answer: Answer: total = 5 x 12 = 60 pencils; 60 / 8 = 7 each with 4 left over.

16. Give the Putonghua wording for these Hong Kong Cantonese terms: snow cabinet (fridge), single vehicle (bicycle), taxi and store. [4]

Answer: Answer: fridge = bīngxiāng; bicycle = zìxíngchē; taxi = chūzūchē; small shop = xiǎo shāngdiàn.

Part E - Reading Aloud and Intonation (16 marks)

4 marks each; mark pauses with a slash and state whether the intonation rises or falls.

17. Mark two pauses in the sentence about the fine weather and going to the park together, and explain the function of pauses. [4]

Answer: Answer: pause after the comment on the weather and again at the end. Pauses divide the sentence into sense groups so that listeners understand easily and the reader can breathe.

18. State the intonation pattern of statements, questions and exclamations, with one example each. [4]

Answer: Answer: statements fall (it is raining today.); yes-no questions rise (are you going?); exclamations start high and fall (wonderful!).

19. Three passages total 480 syllables and must be read within 4 minutes. Find the average speed in syllables per minute and the time needed at 100 syllables per minute. [4]

Answer: Answer: speed = 480 / 4 = 120 syllables per minute; at 100 syllables per minute it takes 480 / 100 = 4.8 minutes, which exceeds the limit, so the reader must speed up.

20. Explain the use of the modal particles ma, ne, ba and a, with one example each. [4]

Answer: Answer: ma marks a yes-no question (are you eating?); ne asks for a follow-up or a particular point (and me?); ba suggests or supposes (let us go); a softens or adds exclamation (all right!).

Part F - Listening and Speaking (16 marks)

4 marks each; answer listening items in note form and speaking items in full sentences.

21. Which three kinds of information should you note down when listening to an announcement? Give one example of each. [4]

Answer: Answer: time (Wednesday 3 p.m.), place (second floor of the library) and the task or requirement (bring your student card to borrow books). Numbers and names are also worth noting.

22. If a speaker talks at about 180 syllables per minute, how many syllables are needed for a 3-minute talk? List three ways to keep to the time limit. [4]

Answer: Answer: 180 x 3 = 540 syllables. Methods: draft an outline, rehearse once with a timer, and cut repeated examples.

23. You phone the school to ask about an activity. Write one polite sentence each for the opening, the enquiry and the closing. [4]

Answer: Answer: opening (hello, this is Chen Xiaoming of S3A, may I ask a question?); enquiry (may I know the meeting time and place for the outing?); closing (thank you, goodbye).

24. How should you take turns and respond to others in a group discussion? Write two points for each. [4]

Answer: Answer: taking turns - raise your hand or wait for the speaker to finish, and make one point at a time; responding - restate the other view before adding to it, and disagree politely (I agree that ..., but ...).
