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NATIONAL STANDARD OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

GB/T 16159-2012

Replacing GB/T 16159-1996

Basic rules of the Chinese phonetic alphabet orthography

汉语拼音正词法基本规则

(English Translation)

Issued on: June 29, 2012 **Implemented on: October 1, 2012**

Issued by: General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine;
Standardization Administration of the PRC

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Foreword

GB/T 16159-2012 was issued on 29 June 2012 by the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine and the Standardization Administration of the People's Republic of China, and has been in force since 1 October 2012. It replaces GB/T 16159-1996.

The standard was drafted in accordance with the rules given in GB/T 1.1-2009.

Compared with GB/T 16159-1996 the main changes are: the specific provisions and usages of the orthography have been reorganised into the basic rules of seven parts - word division and joining, the spelling of personal and place names, capitalisation, abbreviation, tone marking, line breaking and the use of punctuation - with the sections previously arranged by word class brought under the rules for word division and joining, and with rules for abbreviation and for the use of punctuation added.

The section on function words, previously listed alongside nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, numerals and measure words, has been removed and the function word classes raised to stand alongside the content word classes, so that the principle of arranging sections by word class is applied consistently.

The rules for the pinyin spelling of non-Chinese personal names and place names have been revised. Following the provisions of ISO 7098 Romanization of Chinese, a rule has been added that Chinese numerals are spelled in the Chinese phonetic alphabet while Arabic numerals retain their Arabic form. A provision has been added that in certain situations all the letters of a proper noun may be capitalised and the tone marks may be omitted. Flexible rules have been added to accommodate the special needs of certain fields.

The standard was proposed by and is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Language

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Information Management of the Ministry of Education. The principal drafting organisations were the Institute of Linguistics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Institute of Applied Linguistics of the Ministry of Education.

1 Scope

China's national standard for pinyin orthography - not how a single syllable is spelled, which the 1958 Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet already settled, but where one word ends and the next begins. Chinese is written without spaces, so the moment it is romanised somebody has to decide whether a string of syllables is one word or several, and the answer changes how it is alphabetised, searched, hyphenated and read aloud. That decision is not cosmetic: it governs library catalogues, dictionaries, passports, road signs, input methods and every database that sorts Chinese names. This standard sets the rules for writing modern Chinese with the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, covering word division and joining, the spelling of personal and place names, capitalisation, abbreviation, tone marking, line breaking and the use of punctuation, and it adds a set of flexible rules for cases with special needs. It applies to pinyin spelling in culture and education, in editing and publishing, in Chinese information processing and elsewhere. The 2012 edition reorganised the whole document into seven basic rules, added rules for abbreviation and punctuation, raised function words to a word class of their own, revised the treatment of non-Chinese personal and place names, and - following ISO 7098 - fixed that Chinese numerals are spelled in pinyin while Arabic numerals stay as they are.

This standard specifies the rules for spelling modern Chinese with the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet. The content includes the rules for word division and joining, the rules for spelling personal names and place names, the rules for capitalisation, the rules for tone marking, the rules for line breaking, the rules for the use of punctuation marks and others. In order to meet special needs, a number of flexible rules are specified at the same time.

This standard applies to Chinese phonetic alphabet spelling in culture and education, in editing and publishing, in Chinese information processing and in other fields.

2 Normative references

The following documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document, including all amendments, applies.

GB/T 15834 General rules for punctuation.

GB/T 28039 The Chinese phonetic alphabet spelling rules for Chinese names.

Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet, approved by the Fifth Session of the First National People's Congress on 11 February 1958.

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Rules for the spelling of Chinese place names in the Chinese phonetic alphabet (Chinese place names part), issued on 25 December 1984 by the China Committee on Geographical Names, the Committee for Reform of the Chinese Written Language and the National Bureau of Surveying and Mapping.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1
word - the smallest unit of a language that can be used independently.

3.2
scheme for the Chinese phonetic alphabet - the scheme for annotating the pronunciation of Chinese characters and for spelling the sounds of Putonghua, approved by the Fifth Session of the First National People's Congress on 11 February 1958. The scheme uses Latin letters, with diacritical marks to indicate the tones, and is a tool for learning Chinese characters and for promoting Putonghua.

3.3
the Chinese phonetic alphabet orthography - the norms for spelling in the Chinese phonetic alphabet and the criteria for its written form.

4 Principles of formulation

4.1
This standard further specifies the rules for spelling words, on the basis of the rules for spelling syllables established by the Scheme for the Chinese Phonetic Alphabet.

4.2
The word is taken as the unit of spelling, with due consideration given to phonetic and semantic factors and to the length of the spelled form.

4.3
The rules for word division and joining are specified section by section according to the grammatical word classes.

5 General rules

The general rules fix the unit of writing and how syllables are grouped into it. Putonghua is spelled with the word as the basic unit of writing. A disyllabic or trisyllabic structure expressing a single whole concept is written joined. A name of four syllables or more expressing a single whole concept is written divided by word or by speech segment - a

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segment being a part of an expression marked off by a pause within it - and where it cannot be divided by word or by speech segment it is written joined throughout. A reduplicated monosyllabic word is written joined; a reduplicated disyllabic word is written divided.

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