Addressing Chinese

Chinese names appear in a different order than Western names. Each person has, in this order, a family or generational name and a first name. In Chinese names, the family name always comes first. For example, in the name Chen Wu, Chen is the family name and Wu is the given name. He should be addressed as Mr. Chen. Official titles are not used in conversations. Only family members or close friends use first names.

For business purposes, it is traditionally acceptable to call a Chinese person by the surname, together with a title, such as "Director Wang" or "Chairman Li." Address people using official titles such as "General" "Committee Member", or "Bureau Chief" whenever possible. It is customary to address the deputies by skipping the word 'deputy,' such as, 'Chief' for 'Deputy Chief,' 'Chairman' for 'Vice Chairman' 'General Manager' for 'Assistant General Manager'.

Avoid using someone's given name unless you have known him or her for a long period of time. If a person does not have a professional title, address a person using his or her family name only, such as Mr. Chen or Ms. Hsu. Formality is a sign of respect, and it is advisable to clarify how you will address someone very early in a relationship, generally during your first meeting. A married Chinese woman usually retains her maiden name; she will use her husband’s last name on occasions for formal addressing only.