

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

- 1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
- 2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
- 3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
- 4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about fame and notoriety

揚

Putonghua pronunciation: *yang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yeung4*

Meaning: fly, flash, raise, wave, flap, spread

揚 (扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand + 易 *yang2*, wave) means wave/flap/spread: 揚手 (*yang2 shou3* = wave-hand), 揚帆 (*yang2 fan1* = wave-sail = set sail). 揚威 (*yang2 wei1* = wave-ferocity) = flaunt/exert military might. 揚眉 (*yang2 mei2* = raising-eyebrows) is expression of defiance/triumph.

Jockey 躍馬揚鞭 (*yue4 ma3 yang2 bian1* = leap-horse-wave-whip = rides gallantly flashing whip). Man in love 神采飛揚 (*shen2 cai3 fei1 yang2* = spirit-radiance-fly-wave = looks radiant/exultant).

Ambitious son 揚言 (*yang2 yan2* = wave-word = declares/announces): Will 發揚光大 (*fa1 yang2 guang1 da4* = boost-spread-brighten-enlarge = upgrade/expand) family business, 揚名聲, 顯父母 (*yang2 ming2 sheng1, xian3 fu4 mu3* = wave-name-sound, manifest-father-mother = win great fame, bring glory/honor to parents).

by Diana Yue