

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 assassins



Putonghua pronunciation: *leng3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *laang5*

Meanings: cold, cool, cool down, chilly, detached, unexpected, sour

冷 (radical 冫 = 水 *shui3*, water) describes temperature/feelings/attitudes: 冷熱 (*leng3 re4* = cold-hot temperature), 冷藏 (*leng2 cang2* = cold/frozen-storage). 坐冷板凳 (*zuo4 leng3 ban3 deng4* = sit-on~cold~plank~stool) = despised/ignored/unattended.

冷靜 (*leng3 jing4* = cool/detached-quiet/calm) observer 冷眼旁觀 (*leng3 yan3 pang2 guan1* = cool-eye~aside~watch = coolly watches) rivals' 冷戰 (*leng3 zhan4* = cold-war = quarrel), 冷笑 (*leng3 xiao4* = coldly~sneers/smiles/laughs), 放冷箭 (*fang4 leng3 jian4* = release~cold~arrows = makes unexpected/sarcastic verbal attacks).

冷酷 (*leng3 ku4* = cool~merciless) assassin 放冷鎗 (*fang4 leng3 qiang1* = release~cold~gun = fires surprise singular gun-shots). Target 冷不提防 (*leng3 bu4 ti2 fang2* = cold-no~raise-guard = is surprised), 一身冷汗 (*yi1 shen1 leng3 han4* = one/whole~body-cold-sweat = sweats/shivers all-over).