

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 rejuvenation

激

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gik1*

Meaning: stir, excite, arouse, provoke, stimulate, violent, agitated, radical

激 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means stir/excite: 激流 (*ji1 liu2* = rapid-currents), 刺激 (*ci4 ji1* = prickling-excitement), 激動 (*ji1 dong4* = agitated-moved). Restaurant wins critics' 激賞 (*ji1 xiang3* = great-appreciation/praise), customers 激增 (*ji1 zeng1* = rapidly increase).

激素 (*ji1 su4* = stimulate-essence = hormones) 激活 (*ji1 huo2* = excite-bring-alive) glands' excretions. 激光 (*ji1 guang* = stir-light-beam) = laser.

激進 (*ji1 jin4* = excited-advance = radical) leader uses 激將法 (*ji1 jiang4 fa3* = infuriate-general-method = deliberately infuriating language/actions) to 激怒 (*ji1 nu4* = irritate-anger) mob, 激起 (*ji1 qi3* = stirs-up) 過激 (*guo4 ji1* = over-radical = extremist) actions. Sage advises: Restrain 激憤 (*ji1 fen4* = heated-anger), 激情 (*ji1 qing2* = violent-feelings/passions).

by Diana Yue