

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 corruption

廉

Putonghua pronunciation: *lian2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lim4*

Meanings: low-priced, frugal, un-corrupt

廉 = 低廉 (*di1 lian2* = low~cheap-price): 廉價勞力 (*lian2 jia4 lao2 li4* = low~priced~labor~strength = cheap labor). Goods made in China are 價廉物美 (*jia4 lian2 wu4 mei3* = price~cheap~thing~beautiful = cheap and good-quality).

Confucianism advocated 四維 (*si4 wei2* = four~cord/key/standard): 禮 (*li3*, rites/propriety), 義 (*yi4*, righteousness), 廉 (*lian2*, frugal/un-corrupt practice), 恥 (*chi3*, notion of shame). 清廉 (*qing1 lian2* = clear/pure~frugal = 廉潔 *lian2 jie2*, frugal~clean = un-corrupt) officials reject extravagance/bribes.

HK Government 高薪養廉 (*gao1 xin1 yang3 lian2* = high~salary~support~frugal = pay public servants well to keep them un-corrupt), empowers 廉政公署 (*lian2 zheng4 gong1 shu3* = un-corrupt~rule/administration~public~bureau = Independent Commission Against Corruption = ICAC) to investigate 貪污 (*tan1 wu1* = greed~dirt = corruption).

by Diana Yue