

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

揭

(radical 扌 = 手, *shou3* = hand)

Putonghua pronunciation: *jie1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kit3*

Meanings: lift off, unveil, expose, raise high

揭 = lift/uncover with hand: 揭開 (*jie1 kai1* = flip~open = open) book, 揭下 (*jie1 xia4* = take~down) sticker. Groom 揭起 (*jie1 qi3* = lifts~up) bride's veil. Winners rejoice when results 揭曉 (*jie1 xiao3* = lift~dawn/know = are known).

Corrupt officials 捂蓋子 (*wu3 gai4 zi0* = cover~lid~diminutive = cover up secrets/misdeeds). Investigators 揭穿 (*jie1 chuan1* = lift~pierce = smash) lies, 揭發隱私 (*jie1 fa1 yin3 si1* = lift~rise~hidden~private = disclose personal secrets), 揭露 (*jie1 lu4* = lift~show = expose) scandal, 揭示 (*jie1 shi4* = lift~reveal) the real picture.

Rebels 揭竿而起 (*jie1 gan1 er2 qi3* = lift/erect~flag's-bamboo-pole~and~rise = launch uprising). 揭帽致敬 (*jie1 mao4 zhi4 jing4* = lift-hat~show~respect) = hats off in adoration.

by Diana Yue