

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 Chinese moon goddess

升

Putonghua pronunciation: *sheng1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sing1*

Meanings: rise, ascend, hoist, raise, promote, elevate

升 = 上升 (*shang4 sheng1* = ascend-rise) = 升高 (*sheng1 gao1* = rise-high). Sun daily 升起 (*sheng1 qi3* = rise-lift-up = rises). Inflation makes prices 急升 (*ji2 sheng1* = urgent-rise = rise rapidly). Luckily, RMB 升值 (*sheng1 zhi2* = rise-value/worth = appreciates).

Students 升學 (*sheng1 xue2* = rise-school/study = move up to higher stage of education). Employees 升級 (*sheng1 ji2* = rise-class = get promoted). Ambitious bureaucrat wants to 升官 (*sheng1 guan1* = rise-official = rise to higher position).

Christians celebrate Jesus' 復活 (*fu2 huo2* = resume-life = resurrection from the dead), 升天 (*sheng1 tian1* = rise-sky = ascension). Fairy immortal 白日飛升 (*bai2 ri4 fei1 sheng1* = white-day-fly-rise = ascends/flies into the sky in broad daylight).

by Diana Yue