

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 Buddha's sacrifice for eagle and dove



Putonghua pronunciation: *ying1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ying1*

Meanings: eagle, hawk

鷹 (radical 鳥 *niao3*, bird) = 老鷹 (*lao3 ying1* = old~eagle) = eagle. 鷹雛 (*ying1 chu2* = eagle~chick/eaglet) inhabits 鷹巢 (*ying1 chao2* = eagle's~nest), becomes 雄鷹 (*xiong2 ying1* = mighty~eagle). Caucasians have 深目鷹鼻 (*shen1 mu4 ying1 bi2* = deep-set-eyes~eagle/hooks-noses).

秃鷹 (*tu1 ying1* = bald~eagle = vultures/condors), 貓頭鷹 (*mao1 tou2 ying1* = cat~head~eagle = owls) capture 兔 (*tu4*, rabbits), 鴿 (*ge1*, pigeons), 蛇 (*she2*, snakes) with 鷹爪 (*ying1 zhao3* = eagles'~claws). Hunter breeds 獵鷹 (*lie4 ying1* = hunting~eagle = hawks/falcons). Tyrants employ 鷹犬 (*ying1 quan3* = hawks~hounds = running-dogs).

鷹擊長空 (*ying1 ji1 chang2 kong1* = eagle~beat~long~stretching~sky) describes beautiful sight of soaring/gliding eagle flapping wings. 鷹派 (*ying1 pai4* = eagle~sect) = Americanism “war hawks”.

by Diana Yue