

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 love

恨

Putonghua pronunciation: *hen4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *han6*

Meaning: hate, resent, detest, rue, regret, yearn, distress, sadness, remorse

恨 (radical ↑ = 心 *xin1*, heart) covers 憤恨 (*fen4 hen4* = anger-hate = hate/hatred), 悔恨 (*hui4 hen4* = regret-hate = regret/rue), 怨恨 (*yuan4 hen4* = blame-resent), 仇恨 (*chou2 hen4* = offence-hate = deep offence and consequent hate/anger).

Unforgiving person 記恨 (*ji4 hen4* = remembers-offence), 報仇雪恨 (*bao4 chou2 xue3 hen4* = repay-offence-snow/wash-hate = takes revenge). 亡國恨 (*wang2 guo2 hen4* = die-country/state-hatred) = anger/distress felt by loyal subject of destroyed/annexed country.

Compatible singles 相見恨晚 (*xiang1 jian4 hen4 wan3* = each-other-see-regret-late = wish they had met earlier), 恨不得 (*hen4 bu4 de2* = hate/yearn-not-get = wish/yearn to) get married immediately. 愛恨交織 (*ai4 hen4 jiao1 zhi1* = love-hate-cross-knitted) is how person in love-hate relationship feels.

by Diana Yue