

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 PRC's 60th year



Putonghua pronunciation: *ping 2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ping 4*

Meanings: flat, balance, level, ordinary, calm, pacify, conquer

平 = 平衡 (*ping heng 22* = level-balance), 平均 (*ping jun 21* = even~equal), 平面 (*ping mian 24* = flat~surface/two-dimensional), 平靜 (*ping jing 24* = peaceful/calm). 平凡 (*ping fan 22* = ordinary-mundane) = plain/ordinary/mediocre.

Heroes 打不平 (*da bu ping 322* = beat-un-equal = attack/punish inequalities/wrongdoings) for victims. King's army 平寇 (*ping kou 24* = level/suppress/conquer bandits/rebels), brings 太平 (*tai ping 42* = ultimate-peace/order). Buddhists/Christians pray for individuals' 平安 (*ping an 21* = peace-of-mind~safety), world's 和平 (*he ping 22* = harmony~calm = peace).

Egalitarians advocate 人人平等 (*ren ren ping deng 2223* = person~person-level-grade = we're all equal). China wants 和平崛起 (*he ping jue qi 2223* = peaceful-loom-up = rise to greatness without conflict/war).

by Diana Yue