

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 cancers

良

Putonghua pronunciation: *liang2*
Cantonese pronunciation: *leung4*
Meanings: good, benign

良 (radical 良 *gen4*, border/mountain) means good: 良好 (*liang2 hao3* = good~congenial) environment, 純良 (*chun2 liang2* = pure-good) personality. Students are graded as 優良常可劣 (*you1 liang2 chang2 ke3 lie4* = very-good~good-ordinary~ passable~poor). Ad says: 勿失良機 (*wu4 shi1 liang2 ji1* = don't~lose/miss-good-chance!)

Moralists preach 良心 (*liang2 xin1* = good~heart = 良知 *liang2 zhi1* = goodness~known/understood = conscience). Old-fashioned term 良人 (*liang2 ren2* = good~person) means husband. 從良 (*cong2 liang2* = follow~good) describes ex-prostitute decently married.

腫瘤 (*zhong3 liu2* = swollen~lump/growth/mass = tumors) can be 良性 (*liang2 xing4* = good/kind-natured = benign) or 惡性 (*e4 xing4* = bad/fierce-natured = malignant). Leg operation makes person 不良於行 (*bu4 liang2 yu1 xing2* = not-good-at-walking = crippled).

by Diana Yue