

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 memory

記

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gei3*

Meaning: record, remember, mark, remind, report, memory

記 (radical 言 *yan2*, words) = 記憶 (*ji4 yi1* = remembrances/recollections). Prehistoric men 結繩記事 (*jie2 sheng2 ji4 shi4* = knot-rope-remember-thing/event = tied knots on ropes as reminders). Historian 記錄 (*ji4 lu4* = records-notes-down) events. 日記 (*ri4 ji4* = day-record) = diary.

記者 (*ji4 zhe3* = report-er) 記敘 (*ji4 xu4* = records-narrates) happenings. Student makes 記號 (*ji4 hao4* = record-marks = markings) in book, 牢記 (*lao2 ji4* = firmly-memorizes) text. 死記 (*si3 ji4* = dead-memorize) = rote-learning.

Vengeful person 記仇 (*ji4 chou2* = remembers-wrongs/offences = cannot forget/forgive others who offended/ill-treated him).

Dementia patient loses 記憶力 (*ji4 yi1 li4* = remember-recollect-power = memory power), 記不起 (*ji4 bu4 qi3* = remember-no-up = cannot remember) people/things.

by Diana Yue