

Character Builder

您好學？

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 removing obstacles

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi4*

Meaning: shift, move, change, transfer

移 (禾 *he2*, crop + 多 *duo1*, plentiful) means 移動 (*yi2 dong4* = shift-move), 遷移 (*qian1 yi2* = move-home-migrate). Farmer 移植 (*yi2 zhi2* = trans-plants) shoots. Janitor 移走 (*yi2 zou3* = move-run/go/off = 移去 *yi2 qu4* = move-away) rubbish. 移開 (*yi2 kai1* = move-open-up) = "Give way!"

Parents 移民 (*yi2 min2* = move-abode = emigrate), 移交 (*yi2 jiao1* = pass-give) apartment to son. Gifters 轉移 (*zhuan3 yi2* = turn-shift) target's attention, 移花接木 (*yi2 hua1 jie2 mu4* = like grafting, move-flower-connect-wood), swap cards,

移風易俗 (*yi2 feng1 yi4 su2* = shift-wind/trend-change-practice = changing people's habits/beliefs) takes patience, like 愚公移山 (*Yu2 Gong1 yi2 shan1* = the Foolish Old Man Who Removed the Mountains).