

Character Builder

您好學嗎？

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 fame and notoriety

名

Putonghua pronunciation: *ming2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ming4*

Meaning: name, fame

名 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) means 名字 (*ming2 zi4* = name-style-name): 人名 (*ren2 ming2* = person's-name), 地名 (*di4 ming2* = place-name), 名詞 (*ming2 ci2* = name-term) = noun. New-born baby needs 起名 (*qi3 ming2* = to-be-given-name). Shower-party's 名單 (*ming2 dan1* = name-list) has guests' 姓名 (*xing4 ming2* = surname-name = **fu** names).

Philanthropist wins 美名 (*mei3 ming2* = beautiful/good/ praise-worthy-name), 實至名歸 (*shi2 zhi4 ming2 gui1* = reality-arrive-name-return = really deserves fame/praise). 名氣界 (*ming2 qi4 jie4* = name-air/gas-area = celebrities circle) love 名牌 (*ming2 pai2* = famous-brand-names), 浮名 (*fu2 ming2* = floating-name = vanity).

Hermit 隱姓埋名 (*yin3 xing4 mai2 ming2* = vanish-surname-cover-name = lives incognito), discards 虛名 (*xu1 ming2* = empty-fame).

by Diana Yue