

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 dragons



Putonghua pronunciation: *fei1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fei1*

Meanings: fly

飛鳥 (*fei1 niao3* = flying~birds) 飛翔 (*fei1 xiang2* = fly~glide-on-air = fly) in 天空 (*tian1 kong1* = sky~empty = sky). Zoos exhibit 飛禽走獸 (*fei1 qin2 zou3 shou4* = flying~birds~running~animals = various creatures).

Sprinter 飛奔 (*fei1 ben1* = fly~run = speeds/dashes) to end-post. Driver gets fine for 飛車 (*fei1 che1* = fly~car = speeding). 飛彈 (*fei1 dan4* = fly~bullet) = rocket. Pop diva 神采飛揚 (*shen2 cai3 fei1 yang2* = spirit~color/flair~fly~wave/flash = oozes radiance/flair/charm), 拋飛吻 (*pa1 fei1 wen3* = throw~fly~kiss = blows/throws kisses) at fans.

China's 飛躍進步 (*fei1 yue4 jin4 bu4* = fly~leap~advance~step = rapid progress) indicates 蛟龍騰飛 (*jiao1 long2 teng2 fei1* = water~dragon~dragon~ascend~fly = the rise of the dragon).