

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 New Year resolutions

Putonghua pronunciation: *jiu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gau6*

Meanings: old, previous, used, past, passé, obsolete

舊 = past/used. Sentimental people 懷舊 (*huai2 jiu4* = bosom-contains~old = are nostalgic), treasure 舊日 (*jiu4 ri4* = olden-days), 舊事 (*jiu4 shi4* = past-events), re-visit 舊友 (*jiu4 you3* = old-time~friends), 舊居 (*jiu4 ju1* = old-residence/home). 念舊 (*nian4 jiu4* = think-of~old) = show kindness to old friends/associates.

舊衣物 (*jiu4 yi1 wu4* = old~clothes~things) cluster closets. Frugal person buys 舊書 (*jiu4 shu1* = old/used~books), 舊車 (*jiu4 che1* = old/used~car). Fickle person 貪新厭舊 (*tan1 xin1 yan4 jiu2* = covet-new~disdain~old = frivolously changes spouse/job/hobby).

守舊 (*shou3 jiu4* = guard~old = conservative) people mourn passing of 舊時代 (*jiu4 shi2 dai4* = old-time~generation = old era/epoch), but their 陳舊 (*chen2 jiu4* = aged~old = stale) views are unappealing.

by Diana Yue