

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 younger generation

長

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhang 3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jeung 2*

Meanings: grow, elder, senior, head

Plants/animals 生長 (*sheng1 zhang3* = born~grow). Kids 長高 (*zhang3 gao1* = grow~taller), 長肉 (*zhang3 rou4* = develop~flesh/muscles), 成長 (*cheng2 zhang3* = mature~grow).

長 = senior: 家長 (*jia1 zhang3* = family~senior = parents), 長子 (*zhang2 zi3* = eldest~son), 長輩 (*zhang3 bei4* = older~generation-members), 隊長 (*dui4 zhang3* = squad's~captain), 船長 (*chuan2 zhang3* = ship's~captain), church's 長老 (*zhang2 lao3* = elder~old = elders), army's 長官 (*zhang3 guan1* = senior~officers), district's 首長 (*shou2 zhang3* = heads~leaders). Disobedient subordinates 目無尊長 (*mu4 wu2 zhun1 zhang3* = eyes~have~no~supreme~leader = ignore/disrespect authority).

Never help 不長進 (*bu4 zhang3 jin4* = not~grow~progress = inert) kids by 拔苗助長 (*ba2 miao2 zhu4 zhang3* = pull-up~young~shoots~help~grow = overly helping thus destroying them).

by Diana Yue