

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 lovers

情

(radical ↑ = 心 *xin1* = heart)

Putonghua pronunciation: *qing2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ching4*

Meanings: feeling, emotion, attachment, love

Humans have 心情 (*xin1 qing2* = heart's~feelings/moods), 感情 (*gan3 qing2* = sense~feeling = attachment to person/pet/place), 親情 (*qin1 qing2* = blood-relationship~feeling = parent-child emotional bond), 友情 (*you3 qing2* = friend~feeling = friendship). 愛情 (*ai4 qing2* = love~feeling) = romantic love. 情人節 (*qing2 ren2 jie2* = lov-ers'-festival) = Valentine's Day.

Romeo and Juliet 談情說愛 (*tan2 qing2 shuo1 ai4* = talk~feeling~say~love = talk amorous talk, do what lovers do), 雙雙殉情 (*shuang1 shuang1 xun4 qing2* = pair~pair~die-for~love = die together as suicide lovers).

無情 (*wu2 qing2* = have-not~love = heartless) lover 移情別戀 (*yi2 qing2 bie2 lian3* = move~love~other~love = dumps one for another). 一夜情 (*yi1 ye4 qing2* = one~night~love) = one night stand.