

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: *li4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *laap6*

Meanings: stand, establish

Intransitive verb 立 = stand. Sergeant shouts: 立正! (*li4 zheng4* = stand~straight!) Talented guy easily 立足 (*li4 zhu1* = stand~feet = finds foothold) in business world. Newspapers have 立場 (*li4 chang3* = stand~field = stand). 鼎足而立 (*ding3 zhu1 er2 li4* = bronze-tripod~feet~and~stand) describes three equally powerful countries/entities.

Transitive verb 立 = erect/establish. Forefathers 立國 (*li4 guo2* = erect~country = founded nation), 立憲 (*li4 xian4* = erect/established~constitution), 立法 (*li4 fa3* = erect~law = legislated). General 立功 (*li4 gong1* = erect~merit = wins military victory/merit). Parents wish son can 自立 (*zi4 li4* = self~erect = support himself).

破 (*po4*, break/destruction) leads to 立 (*li4*, establish/creation). 破舊立新 (*po4 jiu4 li4 xin1* = break~old~establish~new) = make reforms.

by Diana Yue