

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 spring cleaning

Putonghua pronunciation: *diu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *diu1*

Meanings: drop, lose, discard, neglect

丟 = lose/neglect. Firewood 丟進 (*diu1 jin4* = is-thrown~into) furnace. Wallet 丟失 (*diu1 shi1* = drop~lose = is lost/gone). Bombed soldier 丟了條腿 (*diu1 le0 tiao2 tui3* = lost~ed~a~leg). Vacated house 丟空 (*diu1 kong1* = is-left~empty). Without practice, skills 丟荒 (*diu1 huang1* = are-left~un-worked/rusty). Spy 丟個眼色 (*diu1 ge4 yan3 se1* = throw~one-eye-color = throws a knowing/hinting glance) at co-worker. Dishonored guy 丟人 (*diu1 ren2* = lose~person) = 丟臉 (*diu1 lian3* = lose~face).

In New Year holidays, 丟棄 (*diu1 qi4* = discard~abandon) useless stuff, 丟下 (*diu1 xia4* = put~down) work. Don't 丟開女友 (*diu1 kai1 nü3 you3* = put~aside~girl~friend). Never 丟掉夢想 (*diu1 diao4 meng4 xiang3* = throw~away~dreams~ideas = abandon your dreams!)

by Diana Yue