

Character Builder

您好學？

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 accidents

意

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi3*

Meaning: idea, feeling, sense, meaning, urge, intention, determination

意 (心 *xin1*, heart/mind + 音 *yin1*, sound, i.e. from the heart/mind) means 意念 (*yi4 nian4* = notion/thought), 意識 (*yi4 shi1* = awareness/consciousness), 睡意 (*shui4 yi4* = sleep-sense) = drowsiness. 便意 (*bian4 yi4* = convenience-urge) = urge to stool. Philanthropist 樂意 (*le4 yi4* = happy-feeling = happily/willingly) give donations.

Philosopher explains treatise's 意思 (*yi4 si1* = meaning-ideas), asks for students' 意見 (*yi4 jian4* = ideas-observation/ opinions) on life's 意義 (*yi4 yi4* = meaning-significance). Suitor whose 愛意 (*ai4 yi4* = love/romancec-intention = love) is rejected develops 惡意 (*er4 yi4* = evil/malignant-thoughts), 殺意 (*sha1 yi4* = killing/murder-intent).

Driver 隨意 (*sui2 yi4* = follow-thought = randomly) crosses lanes, causes 意外 (*yi4 wai4* = intention-outside/beyond = unintended/unpredictable happening = accident).

by Diana Yue