

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

癡

Putonghua pronunciation: *chi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chi1*

Meanings: stupidity, dementia, idiocy, obsession, fixation, devotion

癡 = psychological fixation: 情癡 (*qing2 chi1* = love~fixated = obsessed lover), 書癡 (*shu1 chi1* = books~fixated = person obsessed with books/reading). 癡情 (*chi1 qing2* = obsessed~love = 癡心 *chi1 xin1* = obsessed~heart) describes unwaveringly devoted lover. Lad with Oedipus complex 癡戀 (*chi1 lian4* = obsessedly~loves) his mother.

Icon's smile makes fans 癡迷 (*chi1 mi2* = fixated~infatuated). Icon's kiss makes fan 癡了 (*chi1 le0* = fixate~ed = stunned dumb). 癡漢 (*chi1 han4* = fixated/stupid~man) = stupid idiot. 老年癡呆症 (*lao3 nian2 chi1 dai1 zheng4* = old~age~fixated~slow-witted~illness) = Alzheimer's disease.

Fanatics have 癡心妄想 (*chi1 xin1 wang2 xiang3* = obsession~heart~fantasy~thought = un-wise/unrealistic aspirations). Buddhism says 貪瞋癡 (*tan1 chen1 chi1* = greed~anger~lack-of-wisdom) poison man's nature.

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