

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 austerity measures



Putonghua pronunciation: *liang2, liang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *leung4, leung6*

Meanings: measure, estimate, quantity, capacity, amount, mass, standard, quantify

量 = measure quantity: 量杯 (*liang2 bei1* = measuring-cup), 容量 (*rong2 liang4* = contain-quantity = volume), 產量 (*chan3 liang4* = production-volume), 度量衡 (*du4 liang4 heng2* = weights-and-measurements). 器量窄 (*qi4 liang4 zhai3* = vessel-volume-narrow) describes mean person. 酒量淺 (*jiu3 liang4 qian3* = wine-capacity-shallow) = can't drink much wine.

有份量 (*you3 fen4 liang4* = has-portion-capacity) describes heavyweight professional. 不自量力 (*bu4 zi4 liang4 li4* = no-self-measure-strength) describes praying-mantis resisting cart-wheel, i.e. acting beyond means, while 量力而為 (*liang4 li4 er2 wei2* = measure-strength-then-act) means acting within means.

量化寬鬆 (*liang4 hua4 kuan1 song1* = quantity-ize-broad-loosen = quantitative easing, QE) actually means 大量發債 (*da4 liang4 fa1 zhai4* = big-amount-issue-debts/bonds = massive borrowing).

by Diana Yue