

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 warlords

惡

Putonghua pronunciation: e4

Cantonese pronunciation: ok3

Meanings: bad, fierce, evil

惡(radical 心 *xin1*, heart) = bad/ill-intentioned: 惡劣 (*e4 lüe4* = bad-poor) weather/behavior, 惡夢 (*e4 meng4* = bad~dream = nightmare), 惡習 (*e4 xi2* = bad~habit/vice). 惡性腫瘤 (*e4 xing4 zhong3 liu2* = bad-nature~swollen-tumor = malignant tumor) may 惡化 (*e4 hua4* = bad~transform = worsen).

惡魔 (*e4 mo2* = evil-devil) encourages people's 惡念 (*e4 nian4* = evil~thoughts), 惡行 (*e4 xing2* = evil-behavior/acts), but 惡有惡報 (*e4 you3 e4 bao4* = bad~has~bad~repay = evil will catch up with evil-doers).

Warlords are 惡人 (*e4 ren2* = fierce/harmful-persons/bullies), 作惡多端 (*zuo2 e4 duo1 duan1* = do~bad~many~sides = commit many wrongs/crimes). 除惡務盡 (*chu2 e4 wu4 jin4* = remove~bad~must~exhaust) = crushing of evil forces must be merciless/thorough.