

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 waltzes

律

Putonghua pronunciation: *lǜ4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lut6*

Meanings: regulate, rule, law, restrain, discipline

律 = 規律 (*guī1 lǜ4* = rule-law) = fixed pattern. 科學定律 (*ke1xüe2 dīng4 lǜ4* = subject-study-steady-law) = scientific law. 法律 (*fa3 lǜ4* = rule-law) = the law. 律師 (*lǜ4 shī1* = law-master) = lawyer/attorney. 嚴於律己 (*yán2 yú1 lǜ4 jǐ3* = strict-at-regulating-oneself) describes person who can 自律 (*zì4 lǜ4* = impose self-discipline).

Poetry/music has 韻律 (*yùn4 lǜ4* = melody-rule = tonal and rhythmic rules). Composers must know 樂律 (*yüe4 lǜ4* = music-rules/theory), 曲律 (*qū3 lǜ4* = singing-rules = rules of composition in Chinese opera).

Strauss's 藍色的多瑙河 (*lán2 se1 de0 Duo1 Nao3 He2* = blue-color-'s~"Danube"-transliterated-River = The Beautiful Blue Danube) has charming 主旋律 (*zhǔ3 xüan2 lǜ4* = main-whirl-rule = main motif/melody).

by Diana Yue