

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 residency

Putonghua pronunciation: *liu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lau4*

Meanings: stay, remain, keep, retain, leave

留 (radical 田 *tian2*, field) means 留下 (*liu2 xia4* = stay/reserve/retain~behind). 留心 (*liu2 xin1* = keep~heart/mind) = 留神 (*liu2 shen2* = keep~spirit) = “Be careful!” Tourist takes photo 留念 (*liu2 nian4* = keep~memory). Hero 留芳百世 (*liu2 fang1 bai2 shi4* = leave~fragrance~hundred~generations = enjoys lasting fame).

留學 (*liu2 xue2* = stay~study) = go study abroad, e.g. 留法 (*liu2 fa3* = stay~“Fra”nce-transliterated = go study in France). Gauguin 留戀 (*liu2 lian3* = lingers-in~loves) Tahiti, 停留 (*ting2 liu2* = stopped~remained), finally 居留 (*jü1 liu2* = lived~stayed).

Sympathetic country 收留 (*shou4 liu2* = accept~invite-to-stay = accepts, takes in) asylum-seeker. Tackling opponent, kind person 留有餘地 (*liu2 you3 yü2 di4* = leave~have~surplus~ground = gives him some room to maneuver).