

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 tenants

期

Putonghua pronunciation: *qi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kei4*

Meaning: period, stage, term, limit, hope, expect, long

期 (radical 月 *yue4* = moon/month) means limit/period: 日期 (*ri4 qi1* = day-limit = date), 星期 (*xing1 qi1* = star-period = week), 學期 (*xue2 qi1* = school-term), 假期 (*jia4 qi1* = vacation-period). 到期日 (*dao4 qi1 ri4* = arrive-limit-day) means due/ expiry date for rent/canned food.

青春期 (*qing1 chun1 qi1* = green-spring-stage) = puberty. Bride-to-be 期待 (*qi1 dai4* = period-wait = looks forward to) 婚期 (*hun1 qi1* = wedding-date/day). 更年期 (*geng1 nian2 qi1* = change-year-stage) = menopause. Cancer patient fears 死期 (*si3 qi1* = die-date = time/arrival of death).

When lease 期滿 (*qi1 man3* = period-full = expires), tenant 期望 (*qi1 wang4* = period-look-forward = hopes to) 續期 (*xu2 qi1* = continue-period = extend it).