

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 China's economic take-off

翻

Putonghua pronunciation: *fan1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faan1*

Meanings: flip, turn over

Pictogram 翻 = 番 (*fan1*, turn/round) + 羽 (*yü3*, feathers/wings) means flip over. 翻動 (*fan1 dong4* = turn-move) = stir. 翻跟斗 (*fan1 gen1 dou3* = turn-heel-bin) = turn somersault.

Translator 翻閱 (*fan1 yue4* = flips-through~reads) books, 翻譯 (*fan1 yi4* = turn~translates) documents. 翻案 (*fan1 an4* = turn-over~case) = re-assess/change verdict. After apartment's 翻新 (*fan1 xin1* = turn~new = remodeling/renovation), rent 翻一番 (*fan1 yi1 fan1* = turn-over~one~time = doubles).

After Revolution caused 天翻地覆 (*tian1 fan1 di4 fu1* = heaven~turns-over~earth~falls = great turmoil), peasants and workers 翻身 (*fan1 shen1* = turn~body = are restored/raised to respectable status). China's GDP will 翻兩番 (*fan1 liang3 fan1* = turn~two~flip-over = grow by 2 square X 2, i.e. 8 times).