

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 accidents

警

Putonghua pronunciation: *jing3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ging2*

Meaning: alarm, alert, warn, vigilant, police

警 (radical 言 *yan2*, word/speech) means alert/warn: 警覺 (*jing3 jue2* = alert-aware), 警告 (*jing3 gao4* = alarm-tell = warn), 警戒 (*jing3 jie4* = alert-caution). 警方 (*jing3 fang1* = police-side) = the police: 警局 (*jing3 ju2* = police-station), 警察 (*jing3 cha2* = police-watch = policemen), 巡警 (*xun2 jing3* = patrol-police). 警匪 (*jing3 fei3* = police-and-thugs)' car chase caused 撞車 (*zhuang4 che1* = hit-car = car crash). Eye-witness 報警 (*bao4 jing3* = reports-to-the-police). 警車 (*jing3 che1* = police-car/vehicle) sounding 警號 (*jing3 hao4* = alarm-horn/sound = sirens) takes 警員 (*jing3 yuan2* = police-men/constables), 警犬 (*jing3 quan3* = police-dogs) to scene.

Sage coins 警句 (*jing3 ju4* = warn-sentence/statement = stern motto) to 警世 (*jing3 shi4* = warn/admonish/reprimand-the-world).

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