

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 natural harmony



Putonghua pronunciation: *ren2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yan4*

Meaning: mankind, humanity, person, people

人 (picturing person on two legs) means person/people: 個人 (*ge4 ren2* = single-person = individual/self), 外人 (*wai4 ren2* = outside/foreign-er), 愛人 (*ai4 ren2* = lov-er), 蠢人 (*chun3-ren2* = stupid-person). We respect 好人 (*hao3 ren2* = good-person)'s 為人 (*wei2 ren2* = being-person = personality/behavior).

In 人間 (*ren2 jian1* = people-area/space = human world), 人欲橫流 (*ren2 yu4 heng2 liu2* = human-desire-crosswise-flow = greed/lust is everywhere), 壞人 (*huai4 ren2* = bad/evil-people) 害人 (*hai4 ren2* = hurt/harm-people/others), 整人 (*zheng3 ren2* = fix/persecute-others).

黑人 (*hei1 ren2* = black-people) get 非人對待 (*fei1 ren2 dui4 dai4* = not-human-treat-handle = inhuman treatment). 人道 (*ren2 dao4* = human-way = humanitarian/humane) groups slam: "Protect their 人權 (*ren2 quan2* = human-rights)!"

by Diana Yue