

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

續

Putonghua pronunciation: *xù2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *juk3*

Meaning: continue, sustain, extend, connect, successive, sequel

續 (radical 糸 = 絲 *sī1*, silk/thread) means 繼續 (*ji4 xù2* = successive-continuous). Weather 持續 (*chí2 xù2* = remains-continuously) foggy. Tenant 續租 (*xù2 zū1* = continues-to-rent). Car-owner 續保 (*xù2 bǎo3* = extends/renews-insurance-policy). Debtor 斷斷續續 (*duàn4 duàn4 xù2 xù2* = break-break-continue-continue = on-and-off) pays up.

Ex-lovers 再續前緣 (*zài4 xù2 qián2 yuán2* = again-link-previous-destined-link = resume relationship). Bachelor 續弦 (*xù2 xián2* = re-tie/mend-fiddle-string = remarries after wife dies).

Critics call popular 連續劇 (*lián2 xù2 jù2* = linked-connected-drama = drama series) 續集 (*xù2 jí2* = next/new-sequel) 狗尾續貂 (*gǒu3 wěi3 xù2 diào1* = dog's-tail-extend-mink = disappointing tag-on to brilliant original). Capital injection is dying company's 續命湯 (*xù2 mìng4 tāng1* = sustain-life-broth/drink = reviving boost).

by Diana Yue