

Character Builder

您好嗎? 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 progress

騰

Putonghua pronunciation: *teng2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tang1*

Meaning: rise, gallop, leap, soar, fly, rise, vacate, seethe

騰 (radical 月 = 肉 *rou4*, flesh/meat + 騰 *teng2*, horse's body-length shortened in galloping) means rise/gallop/fly. Boiling water 沸騰 (*fei4 teng2* = boil-seethe). Rapids 翻騰 (*fan1 teng2* = toss-splash/turn/roll). 熱氣騰騰 (*ri4 qi4 teng2 teng2* = hot-air-rise-rise) describes steaming hot soup/spa.

萬馬奔騰 (*wan4 ma3 ben1 teng2* = ten-thousand-horses-run-gallop) describes horde of galloping horses. 蛟龍騰飛 (*jiao1 long2 teng2 fei1* = water-dragon-dragon-soar-fly) describes dragon's ascent or hero/country's rise to fame/power. Fairies 騰雲駕霧 (*teng2 yun2 jia4 wu4* = ascend-to-clouds-ride-on-mist = move/ride on clouds).

Retiree 騰出空位 (*teng2 chu1 kong1 wei4* = vacate-out-empty-seat = leaves position empty). Successor takes over, 飛黃騰達 (*fei1 huang2 teng2 da2* = "Fei-Huang", mythical-horse, -soars-rises = soars to high ranks rapidly).

by Diana Yue