

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 diet abstinence

誠

Putonghua pronunciation: *cheng2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sing4*

Meanings: honesty, sincerity, devotion

誠 (radical 言 *yan2*, word + 成 *cheng2*, complete) means truth/honesty: 誠實 (*cheng2 shi2* = honest-true) words, 誠意 (*cheng2 yi4* = honest-idea/intent = sincere) invitation. Question: “真的?” (*zhen1 de0* = true-possessive) = “Is it true?” Answer: “誠然!” (*cheng2 ran2* = honestly-yes = “In truth/certainly!”)

Christian prayer-ending 誠心所願 (*cheng2 xin1 suo3 yüan4* = indeed-heart-which-wish = I/we truly mean/wish it) = Amen. Deflector 投誠 (*tou2 cheng2* = leap/join-honest = joins rival side). Reliable businessmen has 誠信 (*cheng2 xin4* = honesty-believe = credibility).

Buddhist shows 虔誠 (*qian2 cheng2* = devout-honest = piety) by 吃素 (*chi1 su4* = eating~vegetarian), hopes to redeem all slaughtered animals' lives by his 精誠 (*jing1 cheng2* = spirit's ~honesty = absolute sincerity/devotion).

by Diana Yue