

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 talents

記

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gei 3*

Meanings: mark, record, memory

記 = 記號 (*ji hao 44* = record-sign/number = mark/sign), 記錄 (*ji lu 44* = remember-record = records), 記憶 (*ji yi 41* = remember-recall = memorize/memories/reminiscences). 日記 (*ri ji 44* = day-record) = diaries, 遊記 (*you ji 24* = travel-records) = travelogues. 記者 (*ji zhe 43* = record-person = reporters) write in 記敘體 (*ji xu ti 443* = record-narrative-form = narrative form).

Studying requires 記憶力 (*ji yi li 444* = memory-power): 牢記 (*lao ji 24* = firmly-remember), 死記 (*si ji 34* = dead-memorize = rote-learning without understanding). 過目不忘 (*guo mu bu wang 4424* = pass-eyes-no-forget) means having photographic memory.

“別忘記!” (*bie wang ji 242* = don't-forget-remember) = “Don't forget!”