

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 practice



Putonghua pronunciation: *yi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi3*

Meanings: notion, idea, intention, intent

意 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) means 意識 (*yi4 shi1* = notion~ consciousness), 意思 (*yi4 si1* = notion~think = meaning/significance), 意念 (*yi4 nian4* = notion~idea/remembrance). Gifts reflect senders' 心意 (*xin1 yi4* = heart's~intent/fondness), 好意 (*hao3 yi4* = good/kind~intent).

Girl with 情意結 (*qing2 yi1 jie2* = emotion~intent-knot = emotional complex or crush) on man 一心一意 (*yi1 xin1 yi1 yi4* = one-heart~one~intent = wholeheartedly) loves him. Partners sign 誠意 (*cheng2 yi4* = honest~intention = bona fide) agreement. Polls collect 意見 (*yi4 jian4* = idea-see/view = opinions).

Religions explore life's 意義 (*yi4 yi4* = meaning~significance). Spiritual exercises start with 起意 (*qi3 yi4* = emerging~notion-concentration). Long-term pursuit/practice requires 堅定意志 (*jian1 ding4 yi4 zhi4* = intent~spirit/courage~firm~steady = unswerving courage).