

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 photographers



Putonghua pronunciation: *yǐng3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yǐng2*

Meanings: shadow, shade, reflection, silhouette

光 (*guāng1*, light) shines on forms, casts 影子 (*yǐng3 zi0* = shadow~diminutive = shadows/silhouettes). Painter studies 光影 (*guāng1 yǐng3* = light~shadows = shades/chiaroscuro). 攝影 (*shè4 yǐng3* = absorb~shadow = photography) captures 影像 (*yǐng3 xiàng4* = shadows~images). 影印本 (*yǐng3 yìn4 běn3* = shadow~print~version) means xerox/photocopy. Girl poses to 留影 (*liú2 yǐng3* = preserve~shadow = have picture taken).

電影 (*diàn4 yǐng3* = electric~shadows) = cinematography. Romance-movie shows lovers 形影不離 (*xíng2 yǐng3 bù2 lí2* = form~shadow~no~separate = always together). Horror-movie shows 人影 (*rén2 yǐng3* = human~shadows) like 鬼影 (*guǐ3 yǐng3* = phantom/eerie~shadows).

影評人 (*yǐng3 píng2 rén2* = shadow~criticize~person = movie critic) rates 影視節目 (*yǐng3 shì4 jié2 mù4* = shadow/movie~visual/TV~section~item = movie and TV programs).

by Diana Yue