

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: *wen1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *wan1*

Meanings: temperature, heat, warm, tepid, gentle, temperate, review, revisit

溫 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means temperature/heat/hot/warm: 溫帶 (*wen1 dai4* = temperate zone), 溫度 (*wen1 du4* = warmth-degree = temperature), 溫暖 (*wen1 nuan3* = warm-warmth), 降溫 (*jiang4 wen1* = falling-temperature), 體溫 (*ti3 wen1* = body-temperature). Slums are diseases' 溫床 (*wen1 chuang2* = hot-bed).

Girls like 溫柔 (*wen1 rou2* = warm-soft/gentle), 溫和 (*wen1 he2* = warm-kind), 溫文 (*wen1 wen2* = warm-cultivated/polite/gentle) men. Old flame begs 舊夢重溫 (*jiu4 meng4 chong2 wen1* = old-dreams-again-warm-up = revisit past joys).

Students 溫習 (*wen1 xi2* = review-practice = re-read/review) lessons, 溫熟 (*wen1 shu2* = review-cooked = study well) exam texts. 溫故知新 (*wen1 gu4 zhi1 xin1* = review-old-know-new) = revisiting old teachings yields new insight.

by Diana Yue