

# Character Builder 您好學? 次

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:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> 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 quantitative easing

Putonghua pronunciation: *liang2, liang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *leung4, leung6*

Meanings: measure, estimate, quantity, capacity, amount, mass, quantify

量 (radical 里 *li3*, old Chinese land measurement, c. 500 m.) means amount/quantity/measure. 份量 (*fen4 liang4* = part/fraction-quantity) = weight/substance. 容量 (*rong2 liang4* = contain-quantity) = volume/capacity. 食量 (*shi2 liang4* = eat-quantity) = person's food consumption quantity. However, 吞吐量 (*tun1 tu4 liang4* = swallow-spit-volume) means seaport/airport's handling capacity.

度量衡 (*du4 liang4 heng2* = measure-quantify-scales) = weights-and-measures, e.g. metric system. 量化寬鬆 (*liang4 hua4 kuan1 song1* = quantity--ize-broad-loosen = quantitative easing = QE) actually means 大量發債 (*da4 liang4 fa1 zhai4* = big-amount-issue-debts/bonds = massive borrowing).

Sage advises against 不自量力 (*bu4 zi4 liang4 li4* = no-self-measure-strength = acting beyond one's means), advocates 量力而為 (*liang4 li4 er2 wei2* = measure-strength-then-act = acting within means).