

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 faith

任

Putonghua pronunciation: *ren4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yam6*

Meaning: believe, faith, conviction, faithful, reliable, honest, trust, trustworthy, confident

任 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 壬 *ren2*, load carried on shoulder-pole) means 責任 (*ze2 ren4* = responsibility/duty-burden). Employer 信任 (*xin4 ren4* = trust-entrust-with-duty = trusts) employee, gives him 任命 (*ren4 ming4* = appointment-order) with three years' 任期 (*ren4 qi1* = appointment-period).

Schoolmaster 任職 (*ren4 zhi2* = holding-post) at posh school has 任務 (*ren4 wu4* = assigned-duty) to tame 任性 (*ren4 xing4* = trusted/freed/loosened-nature = spoilt) kids because parents 任由 (*ren4 you2* = freely-let) kids play truant.

State leaders should not 任意胡為 (*ren4 yi4 hu2 wei2* = free-intent-barbarically-do-things = act rashly/selfishly) because 任重而道遠 (*ren4 zhong4 er2 dao4 yuan3* = mission-heavy-and-way-far = they are entrusted with meaningful but difficult and long-term missions).

by Diana Yue