

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: *jing3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ging2*

Meanings: scene, view, vista

景 (radical 日 *ri4*, sun) = 景色 (*jing3 se1* = scene-color = pleasant view/vista). 景物 (*jing3 wu4* = scene-objects) = natural/man-made objects in view. 背景 (*bei4 jing3* = back-view) = backdrop/background. Landscape-photographer 取景 (*qu3 jing3* = take/pick-view = select angles, take shots).

攝影沙龍 (*she4 ying3 sha1 long2* = absorb-shadow~“salon”-transliterated = photography exhibition) displays 人像 (*ren2 xiang4* = people-image = portraits), 風景 (*feng1 jing3* = wind/custom-view = landscapes). Set-designer makes 佈景 (*bu4 jing3* = arrange-scene = sets).

Metaphorically, 景 means situation. Up-swing market is 好景 (*hao3 jing3* = good-view = doing well). 前景 (*qian2 jing3* = front-view) = projection. Oldies fear 晚景淒涼 (*wan3 jing3 qi1 liang2* = evening-view~sad~cold = poverty-stricken, destitute old age).

by Diana Yue