

Character Builder

您好學？

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 abusive language

邪

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *che4*

Meaning: unorthodox, heretical, perverted, devilish, sinister, indecent, erotic

邪 (opposite 正 *zheng4*, straight/correct) means 邪惡 (*xie2 e4* = incorrect-evil), 邪教 (*xie2 jiao4* = unorthodox-religion = cults) preach 邪說 (*xie2 shuo1* = unorthodox-sayings = heresy), worship 邪靈 (*xie2 ling2* = evil-spirits). Prigs hate punks' 邪裡邪氣 (*xie2 li3 xie2 qi4* = indecent-inside-indecent-air = weird/outlandish-looking) outfit.

Monk 目不邪視 (*mu4 bu4 xie2 shi4* = eyes-won't-sideways-look = keeps straight gaze), blocks 邪念 (*xie2 nian4* = sinister/erotic-thoughts), 辟邪物 (*pi4 xie2 wu4* = banish-evil-objects = talismans) dispel 邪氣 (*xie2 qi4* = evil-atmosphere/mystic-force), defeat 邪魔外道 (*xie2 mo2 wai4 dao4* = evil-demons-unorthodox-powers), 邪不能勝正 (*xie2 bu4 neng2 sheng4 zheng4* = evil-can't-conquer-righteousness). Criminals must 改邪歸正 (*gai3 xie2 gui1 zheng4* = change-evil-return-to-correct-path = reform themselves).

by Diana Yue