

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 quantitative easing

Putonghua pronunciation: *yin4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yan3*

Meanings: print, stamp, brand

印 (radical 卩 *jie2*, section) means print/imprint/impression: 印記 (*yin4 ji4* = print-record = identification mark), 印章 (*yin4 zhang1* = print-seal = personal seal), 印象 (*yin4 xiang4* = print-image = impression). Ranch cattle carry 烙印 (*luo4 yin4* = seared-branding-mark). Murderer leaves 血手印 (*xue3 shou3 yin4* = bloody-hand's-mark).

Hong Kong property buyers pay 印花費 (*yin4 hua1 fei4* = print-flower/mark-fee = stamp duties). Printing house 印刷 (*yin4 shua1* = print-scrape = prints) books. Classics/bestsellers get 重印 (*chong2 yin4* = re-prints).

Central bank 印發 (*yin4 fa1* = print-issue) 鈔票 (*chao1 piao4* = money-tickets = banknotes). 大量印鈔 (*da4 liang4 yin4 chao1* = big-amount-print-banknotes = massive issuing of banknotes) 印證 (*yin4 zheng4* = mark-evidence = bears witness to) QE3.

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