

Character Builder 您好嗎? 敬

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 filial piety

敬

Putonghua pronunciation: *jing4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ging3*

Meanings: respect, revere, honor, treat politely, present politely

敬 = act respectfully/politely. 恭敬 (*gong1 jing4* = bend-body~respectfully) describes respectful/polite attitude/gesture. Worshipers 敬拜 (*jing4 bai4* = respect~worship) God. Followers 敬仰 (*jing4 yang3* = respect~look-up-to) leader. Children 敬愛 (*jing4 ai4* = respect~love) parents/teachers. Youngsters 敬老 (*jing4 lao3* = respect/help/serve~elders).

Respectful gestures include 敬酒 (*jing4 jiu3* = respectfully-present~wine, make wine toast), 敬禮 (*jing4 li3* = respectful~ceremony/gesture = salute), 鞠躬 (*ju1 gong1* = bow~body = make bow), 叩頭 (*kou4 tou2* = tap~head = kowtow). 默哀致敬 (*mo4 ai1 zhi4 jing4* = silent~grief-present~ respect) describes mourners observing silence.

Diligent workers 敬業 (*jing4 ye4* = respect~profession = take work seriously). Greeting new acquaintances, we say “失敬!” (*shi1 jing4* = lose~respect = Oops! Haven't paid respects to you yet!)

by Diana Yue