

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

借

Putonghua pronunciation: *jie4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *je3*

Meanings: borrow, lend

借 (radical 亻 = 人 *ren2*, human/person) = borrow/lend: 借錢 (*jie4 qian2* = lend/borrow-money), 借用 (*jie4 yong4* = borrow-use) = borrow another's belongings for use. 借口 (*jie4 kou3* = borrow-mouth) = pretext.

借助 (*jie4 zhu4* = borrow-help/aid) = conveniently utilize. Schemer 借刀殺人 (*jie4 dao1 sha1 ren2* = borrow-knife-kill-person = manipulates another to harm/destroy his enemy). Financial guru 借殼上市 (*jie4 ke2 shang4 shi4* = borrow-shell-go-on-market = uses shell/front company for business's IPO). During QE3 banks 借出 (*jie4 chu1* = lend-out) money. Businesses/mortgagees 借機 (*jie4 ji1* = seize-chance) 借貸 (*jie4 dai4* = borrow-loans). Banks/creditors hold 借據 (*jie4 ju4* = borrowing-notes = IOUs) but fear 借債不還 (*jie4 zhai4 bu4 huan2* = borrow-debts-no-return/repay = debt default).

by Diana Yue