

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 romantic love



Putonghua pronunciation: *yin3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yan5*

Meanings: draw, stretch, lead, cause, attract

引 (radical 弓 *gong1*, bow) pictures archer 引弓 (*yin3 gong1* = drawing/stretching~bow). 引而不發 (*yin3 er2 bu4 fa1* = draw-bow~yet~not~release~arrow) = militarily prepared without attacking.

引起 (*yin3 qi3* = cause-to~begin) = 引致 (*yin3 zhi4* = bring~about). Physicist 引導 (*yin3 dao3* = guides~advises) students to calculate 引力 (*yin3 li4* = gravitational~force). Factory 引進 (*yin3 jin4* = lead~enter = introduces) technology. Grenadier 引爆 (*yin3 bao4* = cause~explode = detonates) bomb. 藥引 (*yao4 yin3* = medicine~lead) = medicinal catalyst.

Women with 引人 (*yin3 ren2* = attract~person = attractive) looks can 吸引 (*xi1 yin3* = suck~draw = attract), 引誘 (*yin3 you3* = attract/lure/seduce) men. 引狼入室 (*yin3 lang2 ru4 shi1* = bring~wolf~into~chamber) = willingly/foolishly admit/befriend a potential enemy.

by Diana Yue