

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 leisure

隱

Putonghua pronunciation: *yin3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yan2*

Meanings: vanish, hide, conceal, disappear, unclear, hermitage

隱 = 隱藏 (*yin3 cang2* = vanish~hide), 隱蔽 (*yin3 bi4* = hidden/covered), 隱瞞 (*yin3 man3* = hide~conceal), 隱約 (*yin3 yue1* = hidden~appropriate = vague). 若隱若現 (*ruo4 yin3 ruo4 xian4* = resemble~hidden~resemble~exposed) describes vague apparition.

隱血 (*yin3 xue3* = hidden~blood) = occult blood. 私隱 (*si1 yin3* = private~hidden) = personal secret/privacy. 難言之隱 (*nan2 yan2 zhi1 yin3* = difficult~speak~'s~hidden) = unmentionable secret.

Magician 隱身 (*yin3 shen1* = hide~body = vanishes himself). Tired hero 退隱 (*tui4 yin3* = retires~vanishes), becomes 隱士 (*yin3 shi4* = hide~scholar = hermit). 大隱隱於市 (*da4 yin3 yin3 yu1 shi4* = great~hermit~hides~in~city) means the best form of hermitage/hiding is 隱居 (*yin3 ju1* = hide~abode = living inconnu/secretly) among city-dwellers.

by Diana Yue