

Character Builder 您好學嗎？

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 cosmetic surgery

隆

Putonghua pronunciation: *long2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lung4*

Meaning: grand, intense, thriving, tall, rise, bulge, swell, protrude, honour

Adjective 隆 (radical 阝 *bu4*, hill/lump) means thriving/intense: 隆冬 (*long2 dong1* = deep-winter), 興隆 (*qing1 long2* = prosperous-thriving). Giving 隆重 (*long2 zhong4* = grand-serious = grand) party shows host's 隆情厚意 (*long2 qing2 hou4 yi4* = intense-feeling-dense-intent = sincere goodwill).

Verb 隆 means protrude. Camel's hump 隆起 (*long2 qi3* = bulges-up). Pregnant woman 腹部隆然 (*fu4 bu4 long2 ran2* = belly-part-protrudes-indeed). Old Chinese term 隆準 (*long2 zhun3* = tall-exact) means tall nose, akin to western term 羅馬鼻 (*luo2 ma3 bi2* = "Ro-man"-transliterated-nose = Roman nose).

整容手術 (*zheng3 rong2 shou3 shu4* = reconstruct/reform-face/appearance-hand-method) = cosmetic surgery: 隆鼻 (*long2 bi2* = raise-nose-bridge = augmentation rhinoplasty), 隆胸 (*long2 xiong1* = enlarge-breast = breast implant, mammoplasty enlargement).

by Diana Yue