

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 making friends

誠

Putonghua pronunciation: *cheng2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sing4*

Meanings: sincere, honest, frank

Character 誠 = 言 (*yan2*, words) + 成 (*cheng2*, mature). 誠心誠意 (*cheng2 xin1 cheng2 yi4* = sincere~heart~sincere-intention) = sincerely. Businessman makes 有誠意 (*you3 cheng2 yi4* = has~honest~intention = bona fide) offer, pledging 誠信 (*cheng2 xin4* = honest~believe/credible = credibility).

Mother warns daughter: 誠然 (*cheng2 ran2* = honest-ly = indeed), 男友 (*nan2 you3* = male/man~friend = boyfriend) looks 誠懇 (*cheng2 ken3* = sincere~stooping/earnest = sincere), but is he 誠實 (*cheng2 shi2* = honest~true = honest)? 忠誠 (*zhong1 cheng2* = loyal~sincere = loyal) wife 坦誠 (*tan3 cheng2* = openly/frankly~honestly) points out husband's shortcomings.

Defector 投誠 (*tou2 cheng2* = throw/leap~sincere = joins rival camp). 誠心所願 (*cheng2 xin1 suo3 yuan4* = truly~heart~'s~wish = amen) ends Christian's prayer.