

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 New York

Putonghua pronunciation: **wang⁴**

Cantonese pronunciation: **wong⁶**

Meaning: flourishing, prosperous, vigorous, robust, vibrant

旺 (日 *ri⁴*, sun + 王 *wang²*, king/supremacy) describes fire/energy/luck. Athlete 精力旺盛 (*jing¹ li⁴ wang⁴ sheng⁴* = essence-strength-robust-vibrant = is strong/energetic). Good housewife 旺夫 (*wang⁴ fu¹* = prosper-husband = helps husband succeed). Blockbuster movie 旺場 (*wang⁴ chang³* = robust-place = has good box office).

結婚旺月 (*jie² hun¹ wang⁴ yue⁴* = tie-knot-marriage-prosperous-month) means popular month for holding weddings. 旺舖 (*wang⁴ pu⁴* = prosperous-shop) means shop-front enjoying good customers/business turnover.

When economy 興旺 (*xing¹ wang⁴* = flourishes-booms), commerce 轉旺 (*zhuan³ wang⁴* = turns-vibrant/good). Christmas is retailers' 旺季 (*wang⁴ ji⁴* = high season for making money). 交投暢旺 (*jiao¹ tou² chang⁴ wang⁴* = exchange-invest-smooth-robust = big trading volumes) hail in 旺市 (*wang⁴ shi⁴* = robust-stockmarket).

by Diana Yue