

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 ECFA (Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement)

促

Putonghua pronunciation: *cu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chuk1*

Meanings: pressed, quick, urgent, urge, speed up, get close

促 = (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person) + 足 (*zu2*, foot) indicates stepping forward. 急促 (*ji2 cu4* = urgent-quick) describes speech/music's quick tempo. 短促 (*duan3 cu4* = short-pressed) describes short period/meeting/life.

Supervisor 督促 (*du1 cu4* = order-urge = watches/monitors) production, 催促 (*cui1 cu4* = hurry-urge) workers: “Time is 緊促 (*jin3 cu4* = tight-urgent)! 死線 (*si3 xian4* = dead-line)’s tomorrow!” Salesmen 促銷 (*cu4 xiao1* = urgwe-sell = promote/push) goods.

ECFA will 促進 (*cu4 jin4* = speed-up~forward = push/improve) Mainland-Taiwan economic cooperation, 促使 (*cu4 shi3* = speed-up~let = make) Taiwan's 原居民 (*yuan2 ju1 min2* = original~reside~people = aboriginal tribes), 閩南人 (*min3 nan2 ren2* = Fujian~south-people = Han-Chinese originally from southern Fujian Province) understand Mainland China better.