

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 graduation



Putonghua pronunciation: *bi3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bat1*

Meanings: end, complete, accomplish, conclude, exhaust, completely

畢 (田 *tian2*, field + net-handle, symbolizing farmer's animal-catching net) means 完畢 (*wan2 bi3* = end~completed/over). 語畢 (*yü3 bi3* = words~completed) = having finished saying... 閱畢 (*yüe4 bi3* = read~completed) = having read... 禮畢 (*li3 bi3* = ceremony~completed) = having performed salute/ceremony.

Writing 畢業論文 (*bi3 ye4 lun4 wen2* = complete~work~discuss~essay = graduation thesis/dissertation), attending 畢業試 (*bi3 ye4 shi4* = graduating~test/exam) make 畢業生 (*bi3 ye4 sheng1* = complete~task~student = graduating student) 頹態畢露 (*tui2 tai4 bi3 lu4* = tired~form~all~show = tired out).

Speaker at 畢業典禮 (*bi3 ye4 dian3 li3* = graduation~rite~ceremony = congregation) encourages students to 畢生進取 (*bi3 sheng1 jin4 qü3* = whole~life~forward~acquire = set lifelong goals to attain achievements).