

# 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:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> 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 the gangsters

邪

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *che4*

Meanings: evil, unorthodox, incorrect, indecent, erotic, harmful, strange

邪 means 邪惡 (*xie2 e4* = unrighteous-evil), opposite of 正 (*zheng4* = correct/righteous). 邪教 (*xie2 jiao4* = unorthodox/heretic-teaching/religion = cults) preach 邪說 (*xie2 shuo1* = unorthodox/evil-sayings = heresy), worship 邪靈 (*xie2 ling2* = evil/harmful-spirits).

Prigs frown on 邪裡邪氣 (*xie2 li3 xie2 qi4* = indecent-inside-indecent-air = improper-looking) punks. Avoiding 邪念 (*xie2 nian4* = bad/indecent-thoughts), monk 目不邪視 (*mu4 bu4 xie2 shi4* = eyes-won't-sideways-look = gazes blankly ahead).

Law-enforcers emphasize: 正邪不兩立 (*zheng4 xie2 bu4 liang3 li4* = righteous-unrighteous-no-both-stand = good forces and evil forces can't exist together). Eventually, 邪不能勝正 (*xie2 bu4 neng2 sheng4 zheng4* = evil-forces-can't-conquer-righteous-forces).

Criminals must 改邪歸正 (*gai3 xie2 gui1 zheng4* = change-evil-return-to-correct-path = renounce/drop evil practices).

by Diana Yue