

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 the Foolish Old Man



Putonghua pronunciation: *yi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi4*

Meanings: shift, change position

移 = 移動 (*yi2 dong4* = shift-position~move): 移開 (*yi2 kai1* = move~open = move aside) road-block, 轉移 (*zhuan3 yi2* = turn~shift = transfer) assets. Outgoing regime 移交 (*yi2 jiao1* = move~deliver = transfers) powers to new government. 移民 (*yi2 min2* = shift~people/citizen) = emigration.

Women's uterus 內膜移位 (*nei4 mo4 yi2 wei4* = internal-membrane~change~site = wall-lining~shift-position = endometriosis) causes menstrual pain. Farmers/surgeons 移植 (*yi2 zhi2* = move~ plant = transplant) plants/body organs. Fickle lover 移情別戀 (*yi2 qing2 bie2 lian3* = shift~feeling~other~love = goes for another).

Although 物換星移 (*wu4 huan4 xing1 yi2* = things~change~stars~move = world changes, time passes), Foolish Old Man vows to 移走 (*yi2 zhou3* = move~run = move away) two big mountains.

by Diana Yue