

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 myth of the ten suns



Putonghua pronunciation: *ri4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yat6*

Meanings: sun, day

神話 (*shen2 hua4* = god-talk = myths) describe 神 (*shen2*, gods/goddesses). In 中國神話 (*Zhong1 Guo2 shen2 hua4* = Middle-Kingdom-god-talk = Chinese mythology), 東方天神 (*dong1 fang1 tian1 shen2* = east-direction-sky-god = God of Eastern Heavens) had ten sons, each a 日 (*ri4* = 太陽 *tai4 yang2* = ultimate-yang = sun) with a 鳥 (*niao3*, bird) in the center.

每日 (*mei3 ri4* = each-sun/day = everyday) one sun appears to 萬物 (*wan4 wu4* = ten-thousand-things = all the world), 發光 (*fa1 guang1* = emits-light) 發熱 (*fa1 re4* = emits-heat/warmth).

People lived happily, 日出而作 (*ri4 chu1 er2 zuo4* = sun-out-and-work = work at sunrise), 日入而息 (*ri4 ru4 er2 xi1* = sun-in-and-rest = rest at sundown).