

Character Builder

您好嗎? 呀

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 donations

謝

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *je6*

Meanings: wither, decline, wane, thank

謝 (radical 言 *yan2*, words/speech) means thank. Grateful person says “謝謝!” (*xie4 xie0* = “Thanks!”) Prize-winner 致謝詞 (*zhi4 xie4 ci2* = gives-thankyou-speech = vote of thanks).

Christian's prayer begins with 感謝天父 (*gan3 xie4 tian1 fu4* = feel-thank-heaven-father = Thank you heavenly father).

Performer 謝幕 (*xie4 mo4* = thank-curtain = takes curtain calls). During 謝師宴 (*xie4 shi1 yan4* = thank-teachers-banquet = dinner in honor of teachers), graduates say: 謝天謝地 (*xie4 tian1 xie4 di4* = thank-heaven-thank-earth = Thank heavens) we graduated!

Recipient of great favor/gift says to benefactor: 大恩不言謝 (*da4 en1 bu4 yan2 xie4* = great-kindness-no-talk/mention-thanks), i.e. Instead of voicing my gratitude to you in empty words, I will show it by action.

by Diana Yue