

Character Builder 您好學? 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 climate change

Putonghua pronunciation: *leng3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *laang5*

Meaning: cold, cool, cool down, chilly, detached, aloof, unexpected, sour

冷 (radical 冫 = 水 *shui3*, water) describes temperature/feelings/attitudes: 冷熱 (*leng3 re4* = cold-hot temperature), 寒冷 (*han2 leng3* = chilly-cold), 冰冷 (*bing1 leng3* = icy-cold). Stew 冷卻 (*leng3 que1* = cools-off), 冷藏 (*leng3 cang2* = goes into cold/frozen-storage).

Torturer's 冷酷 (*leng3 ku4* = cold/pitiless-cruel) 冷笑 (*leng3 xiao4* = chilly-smile/laugh/sneer) makes prisoner 出冷汗 (*chu1 leng3 han4* = burst-out-cold-sweat). Quarrelling couple in 冷戰時期 (*leng3 zhan4 shi2 qi1* = cold-war-time-period) should 冷靜 (*leng3 jing4* = cool-quiet = remain calm, reflect).

氣候變冷 (*qi4 hou4 bian4 leng3* = air/weather-season-change-cold) = climate turns colder. In winter, beaches 冷清清 (*leng3 qing1 qing1* = cold-clear-clear = are deserted), insects 冷死 (*leng3 si3* = cold-die = die of cold).