

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 group tours

行

Putonghua pronunciation: *xing2, hang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hang4*

Meaning: go, walk, travel, row, trade, profession

行 (radical 彳 *chu4*, walk slowly) pronounced “hang2” means row/line, profession or commercial building. 行 pronounced “*xing2*” means go/walk/travel: 行走 (*xing2 zou3* = walk-run), 旅行 (*lü2 xing2* = tour-travel), 遠行 (*yüan3 xing2* = distant/long-journey), 行動 (*xing2 dong4* = walk-movement/action), 衣食住行 (*yi1 shi2 zhu4 xing2* = clothes-food-reside-commuting/traveling) are essential expenses.

旅行社 (*lü3 xing2 she4* = travel-agency) announces 行程 (*xing2 cheng2* = travel-route/itinerary), 旅館 (*lü3 guan3* = travel-house = hotels/inns). Tourists prepare 行裝 (*xing2 zhuang1* = travel-clothes), 行李 (*xing2 li3* = travel-things = luggage), request visiting 步行街 (*bu4 xing2 jie1* = step-walk-street = pedestrian street/zone).

How's the sightseeing? “行!” (*xing2*, go = OK/Good!) How's the food? “不行!” (*bu4 xing2* = No-good!)

by Diana Yue