

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 Chinese national anthem

起

Putonghua pronunciation: *qi3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hei2*

Meanings: rise, start, rise, swell, develop, raise

起 (radical 走 *zhou3*, run) means rise/swell/start. 起頭 (*qi3 tou2* = start~head) = beginning/start. Race has 起點 (*qi3 dian3* = starting~ point). River has 起源 (*qi3 yuan2* = start~source = source). Currents 起伏 (*qi3 fu2* = rise-and~fall). Lightning-struck house 起火 (*qi3 huo3* = start~fire = catches fire).

起床 (*qi3 chuang2* = rise~bed) = get out of bed. 起居飲食 (*qi3 jū1 yin3 shi2* = rising~staying-in~drinking~eating) = aspects of everyday home-life. Sympathizers wish patient/business 起色 (*qi3 se1* = rising~color = improvement). 起心 (*qi3 xin1* = rise~heart) = develop covetous intention for something/someone.

“起來!” (*qi3 lai2* = rise~come = “Arise!”) is Chinese national anthem’s call-to-arms, rallying people to 起義 (*qi3 yi4* = rise~righteous = revolt).