

Character Builder 您好學？

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 leaders

領

Putonghua pronunciation: *ling3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ling5*

Meaning: neck, collar, lead, rule, receive

領 (令 *ling4*, control + 頁 *xie2*, human head) suggests head and neck controlling body. Noun 領 means 衣領 (*yi1 ling3* = coat's-collar), 首領 (*shou3 ling3* = head-collar = head/chief/leader). Verb 領 means 帶領 (*dai4 ling3* = guide-lead): 領路 (*ling3 lu4* = lead-road = lead the way), 領航 (*ling3 hang2* = lead-sail = show ships their way). Generals/CEOs 領軍 (*ling3 jun1* = lead-army/company).

Coco Chanel 領先潮流 (*ling4 xian1 chao2 liu2* = lead-ahead-tide-flow = led the trend), was 領頭羊 (*ling3 tou2 yang2* = lead-head-sheep = leader/bellwether) of fashion.

Subordinates glorify 領袖 (*ling3 xiu4* = collar-sleeve = leader): 您領導有方 (*nin2 ling3 dao3 you3 fang1* = your-honour-lead-guide-has-method = "You show great leadership!")

by Diana Yue