

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 eyes

光

Putonghua pronunciation: *guang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gwong1*

Meaning: light, brightness, radiance, glory, empty, bare

光 (火 *huo3* + 儿 kneeling person) suggests lamp/torch/light held by person. 光線 (*guang1 xian4* = light-rays) makes room 光亮 (*guang1 liang4* = brightly-lit-up). Plants need 陽光 (*yang2 guang1* = sun-light). 月光曲 (*yue4 guang1 qu3* = moon-light-song) = Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

Hero wins 光榮 (*guang1 rong2* = light-flourishing = glory/honour). VIP 光臨 (*guang1 lin2* = honour-arrive = honours/graces party by coming).

Ignorant person 鼠目寸光 (*shu3 mu4 cun4 guang1* = rat's-eyes-inch-light = has little/no vision). Young entrepreneur 目光遠大 (*mu4 guang1 yuan3 da4* = eye-light/sight-far-big = is far-sighted), 有眼光 (*you3 yan3 guang1* = has-eye-light = has good observation/judgment), 前途光明 (*qian2 tu2 guang1 ming2* = ahead-path-light-bright = will have a bright future).

by Diana Yue