

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 plans and timetables

計

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gai3*

Meaning: measure, calculate, plan, scheme, plot, tick

計 (radical 言 *yan2*, word) means 計量 (*ji4 liang4* = calculate-measure/gauge), 計數 (*ji4 shu4* = calculate/work-sum/ arithmetic). 計算機 (*ji4 suan4 ji1* = calculate-count-machine) = calculator/computer. 生計 (*sheng1 ji4* = living-plan/ calculations) = livelihood. 斤斤計較 (*jin1 jin1 ji4 jiao4* = catty-catty-calculate-compare) describes miserly/mean person. 計謀 (*ji4 mou2* = plan-conspiracy) = plot/scheme. 工於心計 (*gong1 yu1 sheng1 ji4* = crafty-at-heart-scheme = scheming) person devises 毒計 (*du2 ji4* = poisonous/evil-plot/trick). Enemy 中計 (*zhong4 ji4* = hit-mark-plot/trick = is tricked/ trapped). 計劃生育 (*ji4 hua4 sheng1 yu4* = plan-regulate-birth-nurture) = family planning. Government launches 五年計劃 (*wu3 nian2 ji4 hua4* = five-year-plan). Ambitious country projects 百年大計 (*bai2 nian2 da4 ji4* = hundred-years-big-plan = very long-term goals/ideals).

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