

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 climate change

溶

Putonghua pronunciation: *rong2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yung4*

Meaning: melt, dissolve

溶 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means transitive verb 溶解 (*rong2 jie3* = melt-split = dissolve/dissolution). In 化學 (*hua4 xue2* = transform-studies = chemistry/chemical) process, 溶劑 (*rong2 ji4* = melt/dissolve-formula/agent = solvent) dissolves 溶解物 (*rong2 jie3 wu4* = dissolve-thing = solute), forms 溶液 (*rong2 ye4* = dissolve-liquid = solution).

溶 also means intransitive verb 溶化 (*rong2 hua4* = dissolve-transform = melt). Sugar 可溶 (*ke3 rong2* = can-melt/dissolve = is soluble) in water. 可溶性 (*ke3 rong2 xing4* = can-melt/dissolve-quality) = solubility. 溶洞 (*rong2 dong4* = melt-hole) = karst caves.

全球暖化 (*qian2 qiu2 nuan3 hua4* = entire-ball/globe-warm-transform = global warming) makes 冰河溶化 (*bing1 he2 rong2 hua4* = ice-river-melt-transform = glaciers melt).

by Diana Yue