

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 old family money

揚

Putonghua pronunciation: *yang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yeung4*

Meanings: raise, wave, flap, spread, promote

揚 (扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand + 易 *yang2*, wave) means wave/flap/spread. 揚手 (*yang2 shou3* = wave-hand). Banners 飄揚 (*piao1 yang2* = float-wave = flutter). 張揚 (*zhang1 yang2* = open-wave) means publicizing intent or contemplated action. Army/bully 耀武揚威 (*yao4 wu3 yang2 wei1* = flash~weapons~wave~ferocity = flaunts military might).

吐氣揚眉 (*bu4 qi4 yang2 mei2* = spit~breath~raise~eyebrows) describes person triumphing over defeat/oppression. 神采飛揚 (*shen2 cai3 fei1 yang2* = spirit~radiance~fly~wave) describes inspired/joyful person's radiant/exultant look.

Ambitious son wants to 發揚光大 (*fa1 yang2 guang1 da4* = boost~wave~bright~big = upgrade, expand) family business, 揚名聲, 顯父母 (*yang2 ming2 sheng1, xian3 fu4 mu3* = wave~name~sound, manifest~father~mother = make a big name, bring honor to parents).