

Character Builder

您好嗎? 頌

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 going to church

頌

Putonghua pronunciation: *song4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jung6*

Meanings: praise

頌 (= 公 *gong1*, public + 頁 *ye4*, page) means praise only. During 聖誕節 (*sheng4 dan4 jie2* = holy-birth-festival = Christmas) Christians 歌頌 (*ge1 song4* = sing-praises about) birth of Christ. Masses 頌揚 (*song4 yang2* = praise-raise = emphatically praise/glorify) hero's deeds. Chairman reads prize-winner's 頌詞 (*song4 ci2* = praise-words = eulogy/commendation). Lackey 歌功頌德 (*ge1 gong1 song4 de2* = sing-achievements-praise-virtues = orates on how successful/kind the boss is).

希臘古瓶頌 (*Xi1 La4 gu3 ping2 song4* = "Greece"-transliterated-ancient-jar-praise) is Chinese translation of Shelley's Ode on a Grecian Urn. 快樂頌 (*kuai4 le4 song4* = cheerful-joyful-praise) is Chinese translation of Beethoven's Ode to Joy. 香頌 (*xiang1 song4* = fragrant-praise) is Chinese transliteration/translation of French vocal genre "chanson".

by Diana Yue