

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 love



Putonghua pronunciation: **ai4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **oi3**

Meaning: love, fondness, endearment, care, attachment

愛 (radical 心 **xin1**, heart) means 喜愛 (**xi3 ai4** = like-love): 愛好 (**ai4 hao4** = love-fondness/hobby), 愛吃 (**ai4 chi1** = like-to-eat/savour-food), 愛國 (**ai4 guo2** = love-country/nation = patriotic), 愛心 (**ai4 xin1** = loving-heart/kindness).

Parents 疼愛 (**teng2 ai4** = pain/endear-love = dotes on) daughter, also love son-in-law because 愛屋及烏 (**ai4 wu1 ji2 wu1** = love-house-extend-to-crow = love beloved's beloved). 愛情 (**ai4 qing2** = love-feeling) means romantic love. Valentine card says “我愛你” (**wo3 ai4 ni3** = “I-love-you”). 愛人 (**ai4 ren2** = love-person) means lover or, in Mainland, spouse.

Religions preach 大愛 (**da4 ai4** = big/great-love = selfless/universal love). 愛人如己 (**ai4 ren2 ru2 ji3** = love-people-resemble-self) = “Love thy neighbor as thyself”.

by Diana Yue