

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

Putonghua pronunciation: *luan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *luen6*

Meaning: confuse, untidy, muddle up, disarray, disorganization, rebellion

亂 (radical 乙 *yi3*, second) = 混亂 (*hun4 luan4* = mixed-up- confused/undisciplined). Gluttons 亂吃 (*luan4 chi1* = unrestrained-eat). Jaywalkers 亂走 (*luan4 zou3* = carelessly/ defying-rules-walk). Bluffers 亂說 (*luan4 shuo1* = irresponsibly- speak = bluff/lie). They will 出亂子 (*chu1 luan4 zi0* = out- confuse-diminutive = cause/get into trouble).

Dissidents 胡思亂想 (*hu2 si1 luan4 xiang3* = barbarian-idea-confused-think = harbor wild/unrealistic thoughts), imagine 作亂 (*zuo2 luan4* = make-confusion = rebellion).

氣候變化 (*qi4 hou4 bian4 hua4* = air/weather-season-change-transform = climate change) 搞亂 (*gao3 luan4* = disturbs-disrupts) weather patterns. In sudden cold-spell, people 亂穿衣 (*luan4 chuan1 yi1* = confused-wear-clothes = put on anything anyhow). Ecologists yell: Our world 亂了套! = *luan4 le0 tao4* = confuse-ed-set = is a mess!

by Diana Yue