

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 counting your blessings

謝

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *je6*

Meaning: thank, grateful, decline, refuse, resign, take leave, wither

謝 (radical 言, word/speech) means 感謝 (*gan3 xie4* = feel-thankful/grateful), 道謝 (*dao4 xie4* = say-thankyou). Graduates throw 謝師宴 (*xie4 shi1 yan4* = thank-teacher-banquet = thankyou party for teachers). Christians 謝飯 (*xie4 fan4* = thank-cooked-rice = say grace before meals), 謝恩 (*xie4 en1* = thank-blessing = give thanks to God's blessings),

Saying “謝謝!” (*xie4 xie0* = thanks-thnx, thankyou) is common courtesy. 謝天謝地 (*xie4 tian1 xie4 di4* = thank-heaven-thank-earth = Thank God!) is expression of relief.

致謝 (*zhi4 xie4* = convey-thanks) means expressing 謝意 (*xie4 yi4* = thankful/grateful-feeling) with words/gift. But 大恩不言謝 (*da4 en1 bu4 yan2 xie4* = big-favor/blessing-no-say-thank = To someone who has generously helped you, saying thanks is too superficial).

by Diana Yue