

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 PRC's 60th year



(symmetrical shape of skinned animal hide)

Putonghua pronunciation: *ge 2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gaak 3*

Meanings: animal hide, remove, expel, change, revolutionize

革 means removing 皮革 (*pi ge 22* = skin~hide). 革職 (*ge zhi 22* = remove~post) = dismissal. Institutions evolve through 沿革 (*yan ge 22* = trail/inherit~remove = developments), 改良 (*gai liang 32* = alter~good/better = improvements), 革新 (*ge xin 21* = remove~make-new = reforms).

改革派 (*gai ge pai 324* = change~reform~faction = reformists) opposed 保守派 (*bao shou pai 234* = retain~defend~faction/attitude = conservatives) in Europe's 宗教改革 (*zong jiao gai ge 1432* = head~religion~change~remove = religious reformation), China's 土地改革 (*tu di gai ge 3432* = earth~land~change~remove = land reform).

文革 (*wen ge 22*, short for 文化大革命 *wen hua da ge ming 24424* = writing~teach/transform~big~change~fate/life = Cultural Revolution) smashed institutions.

by Diana Yue