

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 counting your blessings

Putonghua pronunciation: **en1**

Cantonese pronunciation: **yan1**

Meaning: kindness, favor, bestowment, blessing, grace, love, charity

恩 (radical 心 **xin1**, heart) means kindness/bestowment: donor's 恩惠 (**en4 hui4** = kindness-favor), master's 恩賜 (**en1 ci4** = kind-gift), Guanyin's 恩慈 (**en1 ci2** = grace-and-mercy). 感恩節 (**gan3 en1 jie2** = appreciate/thank-blessing-festival) = Thanksgiving Day.

恩愛 (**en1 ai4** = favor-love) describes mutually loving/caring couple. 忘恩負義 (**wang4 en1 fu4 yi4** = forget-kind-betray-righteous) describes traitor. To slaves, liberator is 恩重如山 (**en1 zhong4 ru2 shan1** = kindness-heavy-resemble-mountain = person to whom they owe everything).

Orphan appreciates foster parents' 養育之恩 (**yang3 yu4 zhi1 en1** = breed-raise-'s-kindness = kindness in raising him). 恩人 (**en1 ren2** = favor-person = benefactor) says: 施恩莫望報 (**shi1 en1 mo4 wang4 bao4** = give-favor-don't-hope-return = Don't expect returns for charity given).

by Diana Yue