

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 cycling



Putonghua pronunciation: *qing1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hing1*

Meanings: light-weight

輕 describes weight/mood: 輕微 (*qing1 wei1* = light-tiny = slight) symptoms, 輕鬆 (*qing1 song1* = light-untie = relaxed/relieved) mood, 輕食 (*qing1 shi2* = light~food = snack), 輕音樂 (*qing1 yin1 yue4* = light~sound~music = light music). 輕輕地 (*qing1 qing1 de0* = light~light~adverbial) = lightly/softly/gently.

輕視 (*qing1 shi4* = light~look) = despise/look down on someone/something. Team which 輕敵 (*qing1 di2* = light~enemy = underestimates opponent) loses game. 不識輕重 (*bu4 shi2 qing1 zhong4* = no~know~light~heavy) describes dumb person who cannot assess/prioritize issues.

Cyclist wears 輕裝 (*qing1 zhuang1* = light/casual~clothing), 身輕如燕 (*shen1 qing1 ru2 yan4* = body~light~resemble~swallow = moves weightlessly), feels 輕快 (*qing1 kuai4* = light-weighted~fast/cheerful), 輕易 (*qing1 yi4* = light~easy = easily) reaches destination.

by Diana Yue