

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 passive waiting

待

Putonghua pronunciation: *dai4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *doi6*

Meanings: wait for, wait on, treat

待 (= 等待 *deng3 dai4* = wait~attend) describes time/urgency: 待會 (*dai4 hui4* = wait-a~moment), 待到 (*dai4 dao4* = wait~arrive/ until), 不待 (*bu4 dai4* = without~waiting-for = before).

Standby soldiers 待命 (*dai4 ming4* = await~orders). Lost property 待領 (*dai4 ling3* = wait~take) = waiting for collection. TV-sequel ends with 待續 (*dai3 xu2* = wait~continue = to be cont'd). 待業數字 (*dai4 ye4 shu4 zi4* = wait~employ~sum~word) = unemployment figures.

對待 (*dui4 dai4* = face~treat) = treatment: 厚待 (*hou4 dai4* = thick/good~treatment), 薄待 (*bao2 dai4* = thin/bad~treatment), 冷待 (*leng3 dai4* = cold/disdainful-treatment). 待遇 (*dai4 yu4* = treat-encounter/appreciation) means salary/remunerations. Sage teaches 待人如己 (*dai4 ren2 ru2 ji3* = treat~people~resemble~self = Treat your neighbor as yourself).

by Diana Yue