

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 plans and timetables

律

Putonghua pronunciation: *lǜ4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lut6*

Meaning: law, code, rule, norm, regulate, discipline

律 (彳 *chū4*, walk haltingly + 聿 *yù4*, writing-brush) means code/laws/rules. Nature's workings have 規律 (*guī1 lǜ4* = rule-regulation = order/norms). Scientist discovers 定律 (*dìng4 lǜ4* = law of nature). Country codifies 法律 (*fǎ3 lǜ4* = laws-rules = body of laws): 清律 (*qīng1 lǜ4* = Qing-Dynasty-legal-code), 刑律 (*xíng2 lǜ4* = criminal-code). 律師 (*lǜ4 shī1* = law-master) = lawyer/solicitor/attorney.

Plan's implementation needs 紀律 (*jī4 lǜ4* = rule-regulations = discipline/order). 紀律部隊 (*jī4 lǜ4 bù4 duì4* = discipline-section-team = disciplinary forces) execute 律令 (*lǜ4 lìng4* = decrees/orders), keep public order.

Monk observes 清規戒律 (*qīng1 guī1 jiè4 lǜ4* = pure-regulations-abstinence-rules = religious/monastic rules), 嚴於律己 (*yán2 yū1 lǜ4 jī3* = strict-with-govern-self = is strict in self-discipline).

by Diana Yue