

Character Builder

您好學? 呀

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

進

Putonghua pronunciation: *jin4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jun3*

Meaning: advance, progress, forward, enter

進 (radical 辵 *chuo4*, walk) means 前進 (*qian2 jin4* = advance-forward): 進入 (*jin4 ru4* = advance/enter-into), 進攻 (*jin4 gong1* = advance-attack). 進來 (*jin4 lai2* = advance/enter-come = "Come-in!")

勇於進取 (*yong3 yu1 jin4 qu3* = brave-at-advance-acquire) = ambitious/aggressive). 進軍 (*jin4 jun1* = advance-army) means invade/invest, 冒進 (*mao4 jin4* = risky-advance = rash) investor 無寸進 (*wu2 cun4 jin4* = no-inch-progress = doesn't gain anything).

Student wants 進步 (*jin4 bu4* = forward-step = improvement/progress): 不進則退 (*bu4 jin4 ze2 tui4* = not-advance-then-retreat) = "No advance/progress means retreat/falling backward!" Teacher 跟進 (*gen1 jin4* = follow-advance = follows up on) his 進程 (*jin4 cheng2* = advance-process = track record), 進度表 (*jin4 du4 biao3* = progress-chart/report).

by Diana Yue