**Character Builder**

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.

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**This week: Words about wheat-planting**

*仓*

Putonghua pronunciation: **cang1**
Cantonese pronunciation: **chong1**
Meanings: barn, shed, warehouse

仓 (仓) shows roof-top (人) over door (户) over opening (口).
仓 = 倉庫 (cang1 ku4 = barn-storehouse). 物流管理 (wu4 liu2 guan2 li3 = things-flow-control-handle = logistics management) requires 貨倉 (huo4 cang1 = goods-barn = warehouses) for 倉儲 (cang1 chu3 = storehouse-keep = warehousing). Inhabitant of small apartment rents 迷你倉 (mi2 ni3 cang1 = “mini”-transliterated-warehouse).

米 (mi3, rice), 麥 (mai4, wheat) are 糧 (liang2 = 米 mi3, rice + 量 liang4, quantity = grain-staples), stored in 糧倉 (liang2 cang1 = grains-barns). 天下糧倉 (tian1 xia4 liang2 cang1 = sky-below-grains-barn) means country’s leading grain-producing region.

Idiom 積穀防饑 (ji1 gu3 fang2 ji1 = amass-rice-prevent-hunger/famine) advises saving up food/assets for needy times.

by Diana Yue