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 New Year resolutions

新
Putonghua pronunciation: xin1
Cantonese pronunciation: san1
Meanings: new, fresh

新 follows 舊 (jiu4, old). In 新年 (xin1 nian2 = New-Year) we 棄舊迎新 (qi4 jiu4 ying2 xin1 = abandon-old-welcome-new = ring out the old, ring in the new), see 舊雨新知 (jiu4 yu3 xin1 zhi1 = old-rain-new-know = old friends, new acquaintances).

Society needs 新血 (xin1 xue3 = new-blood). New shops 新張 (xin1 zhang1 = newly-open). New appointees 履新 (lü3 xin1 = shoe/step-into-new = newly assume office). 新人 (xin1 ren2 = new-people = wedding couple) enter 新房 (xin1 fang2 = new/bridal-chamber).

Sinner 改過自新 (gai3 guo4 zi4 xin1 = change-fault-self-new = reforms himself), 從新做人 (cong2 xin1 zuo4 ren2 = from-new-do-person = starts a new life), rejoices in 新生 (xin1 sheng1 = new-life).

by Diana Yue