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 feeling good

悦
Putonghua pronunciation: yüe4
Cantonese pronunciation: yuet6
Meanings: fondness, pleasure, please, fond of

悦 (radical 门 = 心 xin1, heart) means feeling 喜悦 (xi3 yüe4 = joy-pleasure): 大悦 (da4 yüe4 = big/very-pleased), 不悦 (bu4 yüe4 = not-pleased = dismayed). 和顏悦色 (he2 yan2 yüe4 se1 = warm-countenance-pleased-color) = kind/friendly-looking.

悦 also means pleasing: 悅目 (yüe4 mu4 = please-eyes = pretty-looking), 悅耳 (yüe4 er3 = please-ears = sweet-sounding).

Lackey 取悦 (qü3 yüe4 = obtain-fondness = curries favor with) boss to win 龍悦 (chong3 yüe4 = doting-fondness). 賞心悅目 (shang3 xin1 yüe4 mu4 = enjoy-heart-please-eyes) describes glamorous/entertaining scenery/show.

Couple in love 兩情相悅 (liang3 qing2 xiang1 yüe4 = two/both-love-mutually-fond). 女為悦己者容 (nü3 wei4 yüe4 ji3 zhe3 rong2 = woman-for-like-self-person-visage) describes woman donning best look/attire for admirer’s eyes.

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