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

Putonghua pronunciation: lü4
Cantonese pronunciation: lut6
Meaning: law, code, rule, norm, regulate, discipline


Plan's implementation needs 紀律 (jì4 lü4 = rule-regulations = discipline/order). 紀律部隊 (jì4 lü4 bu4 dui4 = discipline-section-team = disciplinary forces) execute 律令 (lü4 lìng4 = decrees/orders), keep public order.

Monk observes 清規戒律 (qing1 gui1 jīe4 lü4 = pure-regulations-abstinence-rules = religious/monastic rules), 嚴於律己 (yán2 yù1 lü4 jí3 = strict-with-govern-self = is strict in self-discipline).

by Diana Yue