

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 stockmarket gambling

膽

Putonghua pronunciation: *dan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *daam2*

Meanings: gall bladder, guts, daring, boldness

膽 = 膽量 *dan3 liang4* = gall-bladder~capacity) means guts/daring. 膽大包天 (*da3 da4 bao1 tian1* = gall-bladder~big~enfold~sky) describes over-greedy/ambitious person. 膽小如鼠 (*dan3 xiao3 ru2 shu3* = gall-bladder~small~resemble~mouse) = very timid.

Rebuke “你膽敢...” (*ni3 dan3 gan3* = you~bold~dare... = “How dare you...” 肝膽相照 (*gan1 dan3 xiang1 zhao4* = liver~gall-bladder~mutual~reflect) describes friends sharing spiritual bond.

Smart speculators have 膽色 (*dan3 se1* = guts~color = mettle), 膽大心細 (*dan3 da4 xin1 xi4* = gall-bladder~big~heart/mind~small = think bold, plan/act meticulously/cautiously), 藝高人膽大 (*yi4 gao1 ren2 dan3 da4* = art~high~person~gall-bladder~big = do daring things with sophisticated/superb skills). However, many 嚇破膽 (*xia1 po4 dan2* = scared~break~gall-bladder = are scared stiff) when market plunges.

by Diana Yue