

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 IDs



Putonghua pronunciation: *qian1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chim1*

Meanings: sign, signature

簽 (radical 竹 *zhu2*, bamboo) = thin bamboo/wooden/plastic slip: 牙簽 (*ya2 qian1* = tooth~slice = toothpick), 書簽 (*shu1 qian1* = bookmark). 標籤 (*biao1 qian1* = mark~slip) = label. Temple worshippers 求簽 (*qiu2 qian1* = beg~bamboo-slip = pick divination slip for oracle's fortune forecast).

簽字 (*qian1 zi4* = sign~word) = indicate consent with signature or drawn sign. 簽約 (*qian1 yue4* = signing~contract) requires parties' 親筆簽名 (*qin1 bi3 qian1 ming2* = self/own~pen~sign~name = own/real signature). Court approves will carrying deceased's 簽名式 (*qian1 ming2 shi1* = sign~name~ style = signature style). Courier delivery requires 簽收 (*qian1 shou1* = sign~receive = signature acknowledging receipt).

Embassy 簽發 (*qian1 fa1* = signs-and-issues) 簽證 (*qian1 zheng4* = sign~evidence = entry visa/permit) to applicant.