

# Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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:

- 1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
- 2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
- 3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
- 4<sup>th</sup> 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 fall colors

樹

Putonghua pronunciation: *shu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sue6*

Meaning: tree, shrub, plant, establish

樹 (radical 木, *mu4* = wood) means trees/shrubs having 樹根 (*shu4 gen1* = tree's-roots), 樹幹 (*shu4 gan4* = tree-trunk), 樹枝 (*shu4 zhi1* = tree's-branches), 樹葉 (*shu4 ye4* = tree's-leaves).

Birds perch 樹上 (*shu4 shang4* = tree-up/on = on trees). Hiker rests 樹下 (*shu4 xia4* = tree-down/below = under a tree). 花樹 (*hua1 shu4* = flowering-trees/shrubs) bloom in spring. 楓樹 (*feng1 shu4* = maple-trees), 影樹 (*ying3 shu4* = shadow-tree = flames of the forest) turn red in autumn.

Genius makes 建樹 (*jian4 shu4* = build-tree = achievements), 樹立 (*shu4 li4* = tree-stand = establishes) good example.

Unpopular person 樹敵 (*shu4 di2* = erect-enemy = makes enemies). 植樹節 (*zhi2 shu4 jie2* = plant-trees-festival) = Arbor Day.

by Diana Yue