

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 England



Putonghua pronunciation: *wang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *wong4*

Meanings: king, royal

王國 (*wang2 guo2* = king~state = kingdom) is ruled by 王朝 (*wang2 chao2* = king~dynasty = royal dynasty/house). 國王 (*guo2 wang2* = state's~king, whose wife is 王后 *wang2 hou4* = king's~queen), passes 王位 (*wang2 wei4* = king's/royal~seat = throne) to 王子 (*wang2 zi3* = king's~son = prince) or 公主 (*gong1 zhu3* = duke's~master = princess).

Currently, 英女王 (*ying1 nu3 wang2* = England's~woman~king = the Queen of England) Elizabeth II rules 聯合王國 (*lian2 he2 wang2 guo2* = join~combine~king~state = the United Kingdom/UK).

王 also means top achiever: 棋王 (*qi2 wang2* = chess~king/ champion), 賭王 (*du3 wang2* = gambling~king/tycoon). Pavarotti is 歌王 (*ge1 wang2* = song~king). 王牌 (*wang2 pai2* = king/ace~card) brands/stars draw best sales/box office.