

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 territorial disputes

佔

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jim3*

Meanings: take by force, capture, seize, occupy, possess, constitute, amount to

佔 = 佔據 (*zhan4 jü4* = take-over-occupy = take overpoweringly/unjustifiably). Bully 佔便宜 (*zhan4 pian2 yi2* = occupy~convenient~cheap = take advantage) of weakling. In soccer Brazilians 佔上風 (*zhan4 shang4 feng1* = occupy~upper~wind = have the upper hand).

Invaders 侵佔 (*qin1 zhan4* = invade~occupy), 霸佔 (*ba4 zhan4* = bully~occupy = appropriate/occupy) others' territories. Gibraltar, Malvinas/Falklands are 英佔 (*Ying1 zhan4* = "Eng" land-transliterated-occupied = occupied by Britain). In the East China Sea, 釣魚島 (*Diao4 Yü2 Dao3* = angle~fish-island = Diaoyudao), which Japan calls 尖閣島 (*Jian1 Ge2 Dao3* = Senkaku-Island), is 日佔 (*Ri4 zhan4* = "Japan"-transliterated-occupied = occupied by Japan).

Depression-hit masses cry: "佔據華爾街!" (*zhan4 jü4 Hua2 Er3 Jie1* = occupy~"Wall"-transliterated~Street) = "Occupy Wall Street!"