

Character Builder

您好嗎? 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:

- 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 mass shootings



Putonghua pronunciation: *chuang3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chong3*

Meanings: intrude, trespass, crash, charge, rush, break into

Pictogram 闖 shows 馬 (*ma3*, horse) crashing through 門 (*men2*, doors), means forcing into/through. Bulls in Pamplona 亂闖 (*luan4 chuang3* = disorderly-rush = dash/charge around wildly). Lab sign 不准闖入 (*bu4 zhun3 chuang3 ru4* = no-permit-intrude-inside) = No entry.

007 勇闖 (*yong3 chuang3* = daringly-breaks-into) criminal den. Swordsman 闖蕩江湖 (*chuang3 dang4 jiang1 hu2* = charge-sway-rivers-lakes = roams the world adventurously). Conquistador 敢闖 (*gan3 chuang3* = dare-charge = takes risks), 闖出新天地 (*chuang3 chu1 xin1 tian1 di4* = rush-ahead-out-new-heaven-earth = opens up a new world).

Careless/reckless people 闖禍 (*chuang3 huo4* = intrude- misfortune/trouble/offence = cause trouble). Gunman 闖進 (*chuang3 jin4* = trespasses-into) school, 闖出大禍 (*chuang3 chu1 da4 huo4* = force-out-big-misfortune = did something really terrible).

by Diana Yue