

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 pearls

澤

Putonghua pronunciation: *ze2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jaak6*

Meanings: pond, marsh, luster, gloss, moisten, nurture, kindness, benefaction

澤 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) = enclosed water-body: 湖澤 (*hu2 ze2* = lakes~ponds), 沼澤 (*zhao3 ze2* = marsh~pool = marsh/wetland/mire), 深山大澤 (*shen1 shan1 da4 ze2* = deep/steep~mountains~big~lakes). Praya become 澤國 (*ze2 guo2* = marsh~country = flooded/inundated area) after heavy rain.

Rain 潤澤萬物 (*run4 ze2 wan4 wu4* = moisten~nurture~ten-thousand~things = nourishes all things). People appreciate benevolent ruler's 恩澤 (*en1 ze2* = kindness~generosity). Lady's admirer seeks to 一親芳澤 (*yi1 qin1 fang1 ze2* = one~close/kiss~fragrant~body~perfume/lotion = have an intimate rendezvous with her).

Good silk/hair has 光澤 (*guang1 ze2* = light~gloss = shine/sheen). Beautiful pearls have 色澤 (*se1 ze2* = color~shine = luster): 晶瑩 (*jing1 ying2* = crystalline~translucent), 光潔 (*guang1 jie2* = bright~clean/pure).

by Diana Yue