

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 IDs



Putonghua pronunciation: *zheng4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jing3*

Meanings: prove, identify, proof, evidence, proof-document

證 (radical 言 *yan2*, speech/word) means 證據 (*zheng4 jü4* = proof/evidence). 證人 (*zheng4 ren2* = proof-person/witness) recognizes 證物 (*zheng4 wu4* = evidence-articles), 指證 (*zhi3 zheng4* = point~prove = testifies against) accused.

證件 (*zheng4 jian4* = proof-documents) 證明 (*zheng4 ming2* = prove/show~clearly) identity/status: 身份證 (*shen1 fen1 zheng4* = body~status~document = ID card), 工作證 (*gong1 zuo2 zheng4* = work~do~document = work permit), 登機證 (*deng1 ji1 zheng4* = ascend~airplane~document = boarding pass). 鐵證如山 (*tie3 zheng4 ru2 shan1* = iron~proof~resemble~mountain) = solid/irrefutable evidence. 死無對證 (*si3 wu2 dui4 zheng4* = dead~no-check/matching~proof) means with suspect/victim/witness dead, no cross-examination/proof-verification is possible.

Passport with 簽證 (*qian1 zheng4* = sign~evidence = entry visa/permit) enables traveler to cross border.