

Character Builder

您好學? 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 first-home purchases

房

Putonghua pronunciation: *fang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fang4*

Meaning: house, apartment, flat, room, building, branch of family

房 (radical 戶 *hu4*, door/household) = 房子 (*fang2 zi0* = house-diminutive = house/building), 房屋 (*fang2 wu1* = house-with-rooms), 房間 (*fang2 jian1* = house-partition) = room, 長房 (*zhang3 fang2* = eldest's-rooms) means eldest son's family-line, 書房 (*shu1 fang2* = books-room) = private study/library, 藥房 (*yao4 fang2* = medicine-room) = apothecary/drugstore. However, 心房 (*xin1 fang2* = heart-room) means depths of someone's heart.

房地產 (*fang2 di4 chan3* = house-land-property) = real estate. Developers 蓋房 (*gai4 fang2* = build-houses), 賣房 (*mai4 fang2* = sell-houses/apartments). 一套房 (*yi1 tao4 fang2* = one-set/suite-of-rooms) means an apartment/flat. Before 買房 (*mai3 fang2* = buying-house/apartment), purchaser studies 房基 (*fang2 ji1* = building's-foundation), 房價 (*fang2 jia4* = house-prices), 房貸 (*fang2 dai4* = housing-mortgage/loan).

by Diana Yue