

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 nuclear leakage

核

Putonghua pronunciation: *he2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hat6*

Meanings: pit, stone, center, core, nucleus, nuclear

核 (radical 木 *mu4*, wood) = hard/dense center: fruit/nut's 果核 (*guo3 he2* = fruit-pit/stone), group's 核心 (*he2 xin1* = pit/stone-heart = core). In matter, 分子 (*fen4 zi0* = separate-diminutive = molecules) comprise 原子 (*yuan2 zi0* = origin-diminutive = atoms) having 核子 (*he2 zi0* = core-diminutive = nucleus/nuclei). 核反應堆 (*he2 fan3 ying4 dui1* = nuclear-reverse-response-pile = nuclear reactor) performs 核裂變 (*he2 lie4 bian4* = nuclear-break-change = nuclear fission). 核反應 (*he2 fan3 ying4* = nuclear-reverse-response = nuclear reaction) generates 熱 (*re4*, heat), 核能 (*he2 neng2* = nuclear-power/energy), 電能 (*dian4 neng2* = electric-power/energy).

核潛艇 (*he2 qian2 ting3* = nuclear-dive-boat = nuclear submarines) are nuclear-powered. 核彈頭 (*he2 dan4 tou2* = nuclear-bomb-heads) = nuclear warheads.