

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 political parties

蔣

Putonghua pronunciation: *jiang3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jeung2*

Meanings: Chinese surname

蔣 is surname of Generalissimo 蔣介石 *Jiang3 Jie4-shi2* = Chiang Kai-shek, 1887-1975), supreme leader of China's 國民黨 (*guo2 min2 dang3* = state~people~party = Nationalist Party) after 孫中山 (*Sun1 Zhong1-shan1* = Sun Yat-sen) died in 1925.

Commandant of 黃埔軍校 (*huang2 pu3 jün1 xiao4* = yellow~port~army~school = Whampoa Military Academy, founded 1924), 蔣 was 軍事獨裁者 (*jün1 shi4 du2 cai2 zhe3* = army~affairs~single~decide~person = military dictator).

Republican China's 四大家族 (*si4 da4 jia1 zu2* = four~big/rich/powerful~family~clans) were 蔣家 (*Jiang3 jia1* = Jiang/Chiang~family), 宋家 (*Song4 jia3* = Song/Soong~family), 孔家 (*Kong3 jia1* = Kong/Kung~family), 陳家 (*Chen2 jia1* = Chen~family). 蔣 died in Taiwan, succeeded by son 蔣經國 (*Jiang3 Jing1-guo2* = Chiang Ching-kuo, 1910-1988).

by Diana Yue