

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 working



Putonghua pronunciation: **zuo4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **jok3**

Meanings: arise, do, make

作 (亻 = 人 **ren2**, person + 乍 **zha4**, sudden) = arise/make/create: 作用 (**zuo4 yong4** = function-effect), 作風 (**zuo4 feng1** = person's behavioral-style). 雷電大作 (**lei2 dian4 da4 zuo4** = thunder-electricity-big-arise) = thunder and lightning suddenly/fiercely strike. Monsters 作怪 (**zuo4 guai4** = cause-disturbances). Warmongers 作孽 (**zuo4 nie4** = commit-evil-deeds).

工作 (**gong1 zuo4** = work-do) = work. 作家 (**zuo4 jia1** = compose-master = writer/author) produces 作品 (**zuo4 pin3** = work-composition/opus). 性工作者 (**xing4 gong1 zuo4 zhe3** = sex-work-do-people) = sex-workers.

Farmers 日出而作, 日入而息 (**ri4 chu1 er2 zuo4, ri4 ru4 er2 xi1** = sun-out-and-work, sun-in-and-rest = follow daylight hours). Pub-goers 飲酒作樂 (**yin3 jiu3 zuo4 le4** = drink-wine/liquore-make-merry).