

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 contracts



Putonghua pronunciation: *shou3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sau2*

Meaning: guard, defend, keep, keep watch, honour, observe, follow, wait

守 (radical 宀 *mian2*, cover) means guard/keep/wait: 守衛 (*shou3 wei4* = guard-defend), 守門 (*shou3 men2* = guard-doors), 防守 (*fang2 shou3* = fence/defense). Soldiers 死守 (*si3 shou3* = die-defend = defend to death) besieged city until it 失守 (*shi1 shou3* = lose-defend = falls).

守舊 (*shou3 jiu4* = keep-old = traditional-minded) people uphold 保守 (*bao3 shou3* = preserve-keep = conservative) principles. 守寡 (*shou3 gua3* = remain-single/widow = widowed) mother helps son 守業 (*shou3 ye4* = safeguard/continue-family-business).

Drivers 遵守 (*zhun1 shou3* = obey-observe) traffic 守則 (*shou3 ze2* = observe-item = rules). Well-bred people 守法 (*shou3 fa3* = observe/obey-the-law), 守信 (*shou3 xin4* = keep-trust/ promises), 守約 (*shou3 yue1* = keep/honour-appointments/ agreements), 守時 (*shou3 shi2* = keep-time = observe punctuality).

by Diana Yue