

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 gourmet dining



Putonghua pronunciation: *fan 2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faan 4*

Meanings: much, many, elaborate

繁 is opposite of 簡 (*jian 3* = simple). 簡體字 (*jian ti zi 234* = simple-form-words = simplified Chinese characters) are condensed from 繁體字 (*fan ti zi 234* = elaborate-form-words = traditional Chinese characters).

Rush-hour traffic is 繁忙 (*fan mang 22* = packed-busy). Big organizations have 繁文縟節 (*fan wen ru jie 2242* = elaborate-documentation/rules-many-rituals = elaborate protocols).

Chinese cuisine 菜式繁多 (*cai shi fan duo 4121* = dishes-styles-elaborate-many = covers a huge range of dishes), 製作繁複 (*zhi zuo fan fu 4122* = produce-make-elaborate-complicated = complicated to make). But 經濟繁榮 (*jing ji fan rong 1422* = rule-supply-much-prosper = economic prosperity) supports 豪華夜宴 (*hao hua ye yan 2244* = extravagant-grand-evening-banquet = extravagant dining).

by Diana Yue