

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

Putonghua pronunciation: *chang3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chong2*

Meanings: factory

廠 (= 工廠 *gong1 chang3* = work~factory) hires 廠長 (*chang3 zhang3* = factory~chief = factory director), 工人 (*gong1 ren2* = work~ers). 製衣廠 (*zhi4 yi1 chang3* = make~clothes~factory) = garments factory. 造船廠 (*zao4 chuan2 hcang3* = make~ship~factory) = shipbuilding factory.

Japan's 東京電力公司 (*dong1 jing1 dian4 li4 gong1 si1* = east~capital~electric~power~public~bureau = Tokyo Electric Power Company = TEPCO) operates 核電廠 (*he2 dian4 chang3* = nuclear~electric~factory = nuclear~power~plants).

Nuclear plants' 廠房 (*chang3 fang2* = factory~room = factory buildings) house 核反應堆 (*he2 fan3 ying4 dui1* = nuclear~reverse~response~pile = nuclear reactors), use 鈾 (*you3*, uranium), 鈾 (*bu4*, plutonium) as 核燃料 (*he2 ran2 liao4* = nuclear~burn~material = nuclear fuel) to 發電 (*fa1 dian4* = generate~electricity).

by Diana Yue