

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 Moses crossing the Red Sea



Putonghua pronunciation: *chu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chut1*

Meanings: emerge, exit, out, leave

Ideogram 出 indicates sprouting/emerging plants. 出現 (*chu1 xian4* = emerge~show) = appear. 出發 (*chu1 fa1* = out~leave) = depart. 出差 (*chu1 chai1* = depart~errand/mission) = away on business trip. 出入 (*chu1 ru4* = exit~enter) also means account/calculation's discrepancy.

出身 (*chu1 shen1* = come-out~body) means person's social position at birth. 出版 (*chu1 ban3* = bring-out~edition) = publish. Monk/nun 出家 (*chu1 jia1* = leave~home, join monastery/ convent).

Christianity's 舊約聖經 (*jiu4 yue sheng4 jing1* = old~contract~holy~scripture = Old Testament Bible) recorded 以色列 (*yi3 se1 lie4* = "Israel"~transliterated)'s history. In 出埃及記 (*chu1 ai1 ji2 ji4* = out~"Egypt"~transliterated~record) = Book of Exodus, 先知 (*xian1 zhi1* = previous~know = prophet) Moses led Israelites 逃出 (*tao2 chu1* = escape~out-of) Egypt.

by Diana Yue