

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 new People's Congress

換

Putonghua pronunciation: *huan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *woon6*

Meanings: change, alter, exchange, substitute

換 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand) = 更換 (*geng1 huan4* = replace~change/exchange): 換衣服 (*huan4 yi1 fu2* = change~clothes~dress = change clothes), 換位 (*huan4 wei4* = change/exchange~seats/positions), 換車 (*huan4 che1* = change/get new car). Employees work 換取 (*huan4 qü3* = change~take = in exchange for) wages.

換人 (*huan4 ren2* = change~person) = replace/substitute staff/occupant. 換代 (*huan4 dai4* = change~generation) = new generation replaces old. RMB cannot 自由兌換 (*zi4 you2 dui4 huan4* = self~allow~match~exchange = isn't freely convertible).

PRC's 18th People's Congress 換屆 (*huan4 jie4* = change-term = gets new team of officer-bearers). 換班 (*huan4 ban1* = change~team) = change shift. 換領導班子 (*huan4 ling3 dao3 ban1 zi0* = change~lead~guide~team~diminutive) = leadership changes hands.

by Diana Yue