

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 Los Angeles

傳

Putonghua pronunciation: *chuan2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chuen4*

Meanings: transfer, transmit, deliver, convey, spread, teach, impart to

傳 (radical 亻 = 人 *ren2*, person/people) = spread (verb intransitive/transitive). Bees 傳送 (*chuan2 song4* = spread~transfer) pollen. News 傳開 (*chuan2 kai1* = spread~out). Great portraits 傳神 (*chuan2 shen2* = transmit/convey~spirit) are vivid/life-like.

傳人 (*chuan2 ren2* = transfer~person) = heir. 傳播學 (*chuan2 bo4 xue2* = spread~broadcast~study) = communication studies. Messenger 傳遞 (*chuan2 di4* = pass~handover = delivers) message.

傳教 (*chuan2 jiao4* = spread/preach~religion) = evangelize. European Catholic 傳教士 (*chuan2 jiao4 shi4* = spread~religion~scholars = missionaries) established 差會 (*chai1 hui4* = send-messenger~society = missions) in 加利福尼亞州 (*ji1 li4 fu1 ni2 ya3* = "California"-transliterated~state), e.g. 洛杉磯 (*luo4 san1 ji1* = "Los Angeles"-transliterated), literally "City of 天使 (*tian1 shi4* = heavenly~messengers = angels)".

by Diana Yue