

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 electricity



Putonghua pronunciation: *dian4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *din6*

Meaning: electric, electricity, electrify

電 (radical 雨 *yü3*, rain) = electricity: 雷電 (*lei2 dian4* = thunder-and-lightning), 閃電 (*shan3 dian4* = flash-of-lightning), 風馳電掣 (*feng1 chi2 dian4 che4* = wind-ride-electricity-steer = at lightning speed).

水壩 (*shui3 ba4* = water-dams), 風機 (*feng1 ji1* = wind-machine = wind turbines), 太陽能板 (*tai4 yang2 neng2 ban3* = ultimate-yang/male-principle-energy-board = solar panels) generate 電力 (*dian4 li4* = electric-power) for 電燈 (*dian4 deng1* = electric-lamps), 電話 (*dian4 hua4* = electric-talk = telephones), 電視 (*dian4 shi4* = electric-watch = television), 電腦 (*dian4 nao3* = electric-brain = computers), 電郵 (*dian4 you2* = electronic/e-mailing),

通電 (*tong1 dian4* = pass-electricity) describes phone-call exchange or pair having right chemistry. 充電 (*chong1 dian4* = charge-electricity) also means take smoke/booster-drink,

by Diana Yue