

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 One Belt One Road

拓

Putonghua pronunciation: *ta4, tuo4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tok3*

Meaning: rub and print, hew, open up, carve out, forge out, stretch, expand, reclaim

拓 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand + 石 *shi2*, stone/rock) means hew/forge out. Chinese artisans 拓印 (*ta4 yin4* = rub-print = make rubbings of) calligraphy carved on steles, produce 拓本 (*ta4 ben3* = rubbed-printed-copy = rubbings).

開拓 (*kai1 tuo4* = open-hew) = open up land/possibilities. Pioneers 拓荒 (*tuo4 huang1* = open-up-wild/virgin-territory). Farmers 拓地 (*tuo4 di4* = reclaim-land). Empire 開疆拓土 (*kai1 jiang1 tuo4 tu3* = expands-territories-develops-land), send slaves/prisoners to 拓邊 (*tuo4 bian1* = hew-fringe = develop border areas).

China launches 一帶一路 (*yil dai4 yil lu4* = One-Belt-One-Road) initiative to 拓寬視野 (*tuo4 kuan1 shi4 ye3* = open-up-broad-see-field = expand vision/outlook), 拓展市場 (*tuo4 zhan3 shi4 chang3* = open-up-expand-market-field = expand markets).

by Diana Yue