

Character Builder 您好學？

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 tenants

租

Putonghua pronunciation: *zu1*
Cantonese pronunciation: *jo1*
Meaning: rent, hire

租 (radical 禾 *he2*, grain-crop's stem) means let/lease/rent/hire. Landlord 租出 (*zu1 chu1* = rents/leases-out) land/house to 租客 (*zu1 ke4* = rent-guest/person = tenant), receives 租金 (*zu1 jin1* = rent-gold/money = rental). Tourist 租車 (*zu1 che1* = rents-car).

Qing Government ceded 租界 (*zu1 jie* = rent-area = concessions) to foreign powers. Shanghai/Tianjin's 英租界 (*Ying1 zu1 jie4* = British-concession), 法租界 (*Fa3 zu1 jie4* = French-Concession) had 治外法權 (*zhi4 wai4 fa2 quan2* = government-outside-legal-right = extraterritoriality = exemption from local jurisdiction/laws).

租房 (*zu1 fang2* = renting-house/apartment) is cheaper than 買房 (*mai3 fang2* = buying-house/apartment). 租約 (*zu1 yue4* = lease/rent-contract/agreement) states 月租 (*yue4 zu1* = monthly-rental), but doesn't allow 分租 (*fen1 zu1* = divide-lease = sub-letting/sub-leasing).

by Diana Yue