

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 One Belt One Road

征

Putonghua pronunciation: **zheng1**

Cantonese pronunciation: **jing1**

Meaning: summon, call for, invite, levy, march, expedition, launch war against

徵, 征 (**zheng1**) share radical 彳 (**chi4**, limbs walking). 徵求 (**zheng1 qiu2** = call-for-see) = invite/summon; 徵文 (**zheng1 wen2** = call-for-papers, essay competition), 徵稅 (**zheng1 shui4** = levy-taxes). 徵兵制 (**zheng1 bing1 zhi4** = enlist-soldiers-system) = conscription.

征 (徵's simplified character) means 出征 (**chu1 zheng1** = go-out-conscripted-soldiers = launch march/expedition), echoing 徵's military connotation: 十字軍東征 (**shi2 zi4 jun1 dong1 zheng1** = "十/cross"-shaped-character-army-east-march = the Crusades), Chinese Red Army's 長征 (**chang2 zheng1** = Long-March, 1934-35).

China 徵調 (**zheng1 diao4** = brings-together-deploys) resources for 一帶一路 (**y1 dai4 y1 lu4** = One-Belt-One-Road): 遠征 (**yuan3 zheng1** = distant-march = go long way into) Central Asia, 征服 (**zheng1 fu2** = march/fight-against-conquer) difficulties.

by Diana Yue