

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 waltzes



Putonghua pronunciation: *qū3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kuk1*

Meanings: melody, song

Noun 曲 (*qū3*) = 樂曲 (*yüe4 qū3* = music-melody), 歌曲 (*ge1 qū3* = song-melody = song). 曲調 (*qū3 diao4* = song's-tune) = melody, 曲詞 (*qū3 ci2* = song's-words) = lyrics.

Diva 高歌一曲 (*gao1 ge1 yi1 qū3* = high-sing-one-song = performs a song sonorously). 曲高和寡 (*qū3 gao1 he2 gua3* = song-high-harmony/accompaniment-few) describes fine art unappreciated. 曲終人散 (*qū3 zhong1 ren2 shan4* = song-ends-people-disperse) = party/fanfare's over, no more merriment.

小夜曲 (*xiao3 ye4 qū3* = little-night-tune) = serenade. 進行曲 (*jin4 xing2 qū3* = advance-walk-tune) = march. 怨曲 (*yüan4 qū3* = sorrow-song) = blues. 圓舞曲 (*yüan2 wu3 qu3* = round-dance-melody = waltz) is in 三拍 (*san1 pai3* = three-beats = triple time).