

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 reunion gatherings

親

Putonghua pronunciation: *qin1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chan1*

Meanings: dear, family, parent, blood relation, marriage, close, in person, kiss

親 = 親人 (*qin1 ren2* = blood-relation~persons = family/kinsmen): 父親 (*fu4 qin1* = father~parent), 母親 (*mu3 qin1* = mother~parent), 兒子 (*er2 zi0* = child~son = son), 女兒 (*nü3 er0* = daughter~child = daughter), 親戚 (*qin1 qi1* = close~relatives).

Couple 成親 (*cheng2 qin1* = fulfil-marriage = marry), 親嘴 (*qin1 zui3* = kiss~mouth = kiss each other on the lips). Parents meet 親家 (*qin4 jia1* = close~family = son's/daughter's in-laws).

至親好友 (*zhi4 qin1 hao3 you3* = closest~blood-relations~good-friends = family and friends) 親臨 (*qin1 lin2* = personally~arrive/attend) couple's 30th wedding anniversary, meet their 親生子女 (*qin1 sheng1 zi3 nü3* = blood-born~son~daughter = biological offspring), congratulate family for 相親相愛 (*xiang1 qin1 xiang1 ai4* = mutual~endearment~mutual-love).