

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 austerity measures

用

Putonghua pronunciation: *yong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yung6*

Meanings: use, apply, consume, employ, spend, expenses

Pictogram 用 resembles useful bucket, means 使用 (*shi3 yong4* = employ~use): 用水 (*yong4 shui3* = use~water), 用錢 (*yong4 qian3* = use/spend~money), 用力 (*yong4 li4* = use~effort/force). 用心學 (*yong4 xin1 xue2* = use~heart~study) = study attentively/hard. 用人惟親 (*yong4 ren4 wei2 qin1* = engage~people~only~family/relatives) = nepotism.

用戶 (*yong4 hu4* = user/customer~household) pays 費用 (*fei4 yong4* = spend~use = fees/charges). Engineering is 應用 (*ying4 yon4* = apply~use = applied) science. 軍轉民用 (*jün1 zhuan3 min2 yong4* = military~transfer~civil/people~use) = convert military industries into industries mass-producing for social consumption.

Impoverished government 緊縮開支 (*jin3 suo1 kai1 zhi1* = tight~shrink~open~pay = imposes austerity measures). 有用 (*you3 yong4* = has~use = useful)? 無用 (*wu2 yong4* = no~use)?

by Diana Yue