

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 stockmarket gambling

Putonghua pronunciation: *jin1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gam1*

Meanings: metal, gold, money

金 means 金屬 (*jin1 shu2* = gold-kind = metal), 黃金 (*huang2 jin1* = yellow-gold = gold), 金錢 (*jin1 qian2* = gold-money = money). 美金 (Mei3 jin1 = A “me” rican-transliterated-gold/money) = 美元 (Mei3 yüan2 = US dollar).

Nations hold 黃金儲備 (*huang2 jin1 shu4 bei4* = yellow-gold-save-prepare = gold-reserves) to protect their 貨幣 (*huo4 bi4* = commodities-currencies = currencies) and 對沖 (*dui4 chong1* = opposite-flush = hedge against) US dollar. Speculators watch 金價 (*jin1 jia4* = gold-price), expect 金升 (*jin1 sheng1* = gold-price-rises) when 元低 (*yüan2 di1* = US-dollar-low), 金跌 (*jin1 die1* = gold-price-falls) when 元高 (*yüan2 gao1* = US-dollar-high).

Buy 金條 (*jin1 tiao2* = gold-bars), 金股 (*jin1 gu3* = gold-shares) for a rainy day.