

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 lonely people

獨

Putonghua pronunciation: *du2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *duk6*

Meanings: single, unique, alone

獨 (radical 犳 qūan3, dog) suggests single dog among sheep. 獨自 (*du2 zi4* = single-self) = by oneself. 獨立 (*du2 li4* = alone-stand) = achieve/keep independent status/means. 獨唱 (*du2 chang4* = single-sing) = solo. Designer's 獨創 (*du2 chuang4* = uniquely-creative) style shows 獨特 (*du2 te4* = unique/unequaled-unusual) aesthetics.

獨眼龍 (*du2 yan3 long2* = one-eyed-dragon) also means one-eyed guy. 獨行俠 (*du2 xing2 xia2* = lonely-walk-knight) = hero roaming/acting alone. 獨裁者 (*du2 cai2 zhe3* = single-judge/decide-person) = dictator,

獨身漢 (*du2 shen1 han4* = companion-less-body-man = bachelor) 獨來獨往 (*du2 lai2 du2 wang3* = single-come-single-go = goes places alone), sighs: 獨酌無歡! (*du2 zhuo2 wu2 huan1* = single-pour-wine-no-mirth = "Drinking/eating alone is no fun!")

by Diana Yue