

Character Builder

您好學嗎？

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 islands and atolls

航

Putonghua pronunciation: *hang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hong4*

Meaning: sail, voyage, journey, travel

航 (radical 舟 *zhou1*, boat) means 航行 (*hang2 xing2* = sail-travel/move): 航海 (*hang2 hai3* = sail-the-seas), 航空 (*hang2 kong1* = sail-skies = aviation), 民航 (*min2 hang2* = civil-aviation) companies run 航班 (*hang2 ban1* = travel-shift = airflights), 航運 (*hang2 yun4* = sail/voyage-transport) = shipping, 航隊 (*hang2 dui4* = sailing-fleet) 啟航 (*qi3 hang2* = starts-voyage), follows 航道 (*hang2 dao4* = sailing-route) between 島礁 (*dao3 jiao1* = islands-atolls), Dolphins 領航 (*ling3 hang2* = guide-ships), Destroyers 護航 (*hu4 hang2* = protect-ships) against pirates, 航天工業 (*hang2 tian1 gong1 ye4* = travel-sky-work-profession) = aerospace industry. 北斗 (*bei3 dou3* = BeiDou, Great Dipper) is China's 衛星導航 (*wei4 xing1 dao3 hang2* = protect-star-guide-voyage = satellite navigation) system.

by Diana Yue