

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 storytelling

折

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhe1, zhe2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jit3*

Meaning: twist, bend, section

折 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand) = 拗折 (*ao3 zhe2* = bend-bent), 折斷 (*zhe2 duan4* = bend-break). Accident victim has 骨折 (*gu3 zhe2* = bones-broken). Retailer gives 折扣 (*zhe2 kou4* = bend-subtract = discount), e.g. 八折 (*ba1 zhe2* = eight-subtract = 20% off).

Hero experiences 折磨 (*zhe2 mo2* = bend-grind = physical/mental torment/torture), defies 挫折 (*cuo4 zhe2* = fall-bend = defeats/failures). Onlookers 折服 (*zhe2 fu2* = bend/humbly-respect him).

Story-line 轉折 (*zhuan3 zhe1* = turn-bend = has twists and turns): lovers re-unite after 一波三折 (*yi1 bo1 san1 zhe2* = one-wave-three-twists = many mishaps). Narrator tells 一折 (*yi1 zhe2* = one-section/excerpt), asserts plot is 不折不扣 (*bu4 zhe2 bu4 kou4* = no-discount-no-subtract = absolutely/fully) presented.

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