

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 making selections

選

Putonghua pronunciation: *xuǎn3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *suen2*

Meaning: select, pick, choose, opt, elect, election

選 (radical 辵 *chuo4*, walk + 巛 *xūn4*, assist) indicates sending/ selecting: 選擇 (*xuǎn3 ze2* = choose/select-choice): swimming 選手 (*xuǎn3 shǒu3* = selected-hand = swimmer chosen to represent region), 選美 (*xuǎn3 měi3* = select-beauty = beauty contest), 詩選 (*shī xuǎn3* = poems-selected or poetry-anthology).

選舉 (*xuǎn3 jǔ3* = select-raise/nominate) = election. 競選 (*jìng4 xuǎn3* = compete-select) = run/compete/campaign for office. 競選人 (*jìng4 xuǎn3 rén2* = compete-person = candidate) 當選 (*dāng1 xuǎn3* = gets-elected) or 落選 (*luo4 xuǎn3* = fall-elected = loses election).

Girl 選男友 (*xuǎn3 nán2 yǒu3* = picks-boy-friend): 首選 (*shǒu3 xuǎn3* = first-choice), 次選 (*cì4 xuǎn3* = second-choice).

Handsome millionaire is 上上之選 (*shàng4 shàng4 zhī xuǎn3* = up-up-'s-choice = best choice).