

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 natural harmony

和

Putonghua pronunciation: *he2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *woh4*

Meaning: mild, blend, mix, harmony, echo, and, with, even, peaceful

和 (radical 禾 *he2*, grain-crop) means 溫和 (*wen1 he2* = warm-mild), 調和 (*tiao2 he2* = mix-blend). Match 打和 (*da3 he2* = fight-even = ends with tied scores). Brothers 不和 (*bu4 he2* = not-harmonious = dislike/spurn each other). Composers study 和聲 (*he2 sheng1* = blended-sound = harmony). Musicians 唱和 (*chang4 he2* = sing-echo/accompany each other).

天時地利人和 (*tian1 shi2 di4 li4 ren2 he2* = heaven-time-land-advantage-people-harmony = right time, right place, right people) decide mission's success. 和平 (*he2 ping2* = harmony-calm) means peace/peaceful. Tolstoy wrote “戰爭與和平” (*zhan4 zheng1 yu3 he2 ping2* = War-and-Peace).

Keep society/relationships 和諧 (*he2 xie2* = peaceful-harmonious). 中和 (*zhong1 he2* = taking central/unbiased- friendly/peaceful position) is Chinese philosophy's Golden Mean.

by Diana Yue