

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 military parades



Putonghua pronunciation: *jun 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gwan 1*

Meanings: army

軍隊 (*jun1 dui4* = army~team) = army/troops. 海陸空三軍 (*hai3 lu4 kong1 san1 jun1* = sea~land~sky~three~armies) = navy, army, air-force. 軍人 (*jun1 ren2* = army~man) = soldier.

胡錦濤 (*Hu2 Jin3-tao1*) inspected army at 大閱兵 (*da4 yue4 bing1* = big~read~soldiers = big military parade). 將軍 (*jiang1 jun1* = lead~army = generals) lead 軍事演習 (*jun1 shi4 yan3 xi2* = army~affairs~perform~practice = military exercises).

人民解放軍 (*ren2 min2 jie3 fang4 jun1* = person~people~loosen~free~army = People's Liberation Army, PLA) has 核潛艇 (*he2 qian2 ting3* = nuclear~dive/under~water~boat = nuclear submarines), 戰機 (*zhan4 ji1* = war/ fighter~planes), will build 航母 (short for 航空母艦, *hang2 kong1 mu3 jian4* = sail/fly~sky~mother~warship = aircraft carriers).