

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 presidential elections

Putonghua pronunciation: *piao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *piu3*

Meanings: ticket, vote

票 (radical 示 *shi4*, show/indicate) means slip/ticket/writ: 郵票 (*you2 piao4* = postal~stamp), 戲票 (*xi4 piao4* = movie~ticket), 票根 (*piao4 gen1* = ticket~root) = ticket stub. PRC once used 糧票 (*liang2 piao4* = grains/food~stamps/coupons).

匯票 (*hui4 piao4* = transfer~slip) = bank draft. 告票 (*gao4 piao4* = prosecute~ticket) = court's summons. Voters have 選票 (*xuan3 piao4* = election~votes), want 一人一票 (*yi1 ren2 yi1 piao4* = one~person~one~vote).

Before 投票日 (*tou2 piao4 ri4* = cast~votes~day = election day), candidates 拉票 (*la1 piao4* = pull/drag~votes = rally votes). Slandered candidate 失票 (*shi1 piao4* = lose~votes). Candidate supported by 鐵票 (*tie3 piao4* = iron/unswerving~votes) 高票當選 (*gao1 piao4 dang1 xuan3* = high/big-number~votes~get~elected = wins with massive votes).

by Diana Yue