

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 kitchens

廚

Putonghua pronunciation: *chu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chue4*

Meaning: kitchen, cook

廚 (radical 广 *yan3*, house/hall) = 廚房 (cook's-room = kitchen): 廚子 (*chu2 zi0* = cook-man = cook), 廚師 (*chu2 shi1* = kitchen-master = chef), 廚具 (*chu2 ju4* = kitchen/cooking-utensils),

Housewife 下廚 (*xia4 chu2* = down-into-kitchen = cooks), reheats 廚餘 (*chu2 yu2* = kitchen-leftovers). Steakhouse hires 西廚 (*xi1 chu2* = western-chef) as 主廚 (*zhu3 chu2* = head-chef), 名廚 (*ming2 chu2* = name-cook = famous chef) gets Michelin star.

Confucian motto 君子遠庖廚 (*jun1 zi3 yuan3 pao2 chu2* = gentleman-far-kitchen) means men with principles avoid the kitchen to avoid feeling sad about animals slaughtered for food. However, pragmatists believe 近廚得食 (*jin4 chu2 de2 shi2* = near-kitchen-get-eat = those near the kitchen get to eat the food).

by Diana Yue