

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 borrowing arrows

Putonghua pronunciation: *huo4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *wok6*

Meanings: gain, acquire

獲 (*huo2*) has radical 犳 (= animals). 獵獲物 (*lie4 huo4 wu4* = hunt~gain~thing) = hunted-down prey. Diligence brings 收穫 (*shou1 huo4* = gather-in~gain = gain/return). 獲 's homonym 穫 (*huo4*, radical 禾 *huo2*, padi shoot) means harvest.

Fastest runner 獲勝 (*huo4 sheng4* = get~win = gains victory), 獲獎 (*huo4 jiang3* = gets~prize). Unlucky competitor 一無所獲 (*yi1 wu2 suo3 huo4* = one~none~'s~gain = gets nothing).

蜀 (*Shu2*) Kingdom's battleships sailed on fog-shrouded 長江 (*Chang2 Jiang1* = long~river = the Yangtze River), lured 魏 (*Wei4*) Kingdom's archers to 射箭 (*she4 jian4* = shoot~arrows), 獲得 (*huo4 de2* = gained~acquired) 130,000 arrows, were determined to 大獲全勝 (*da4 huo4 quan2 sheng4* = big~gain~whole~victory = win complete/overwhelming victory) in forthcoming battle.