

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 fishing

(radical 氵 = 水 shuǐ3, water)

Putonghua pronunciation: *yu 2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yue 4*

Meanings: water

魚 Verb 漁 = 氵 (water-drops) + noun 魚 (*yu2*, fish) which floats on (water-drops): 漁民 (*yu2 min2* = fishing~people = fishermen), 漁船 (*yu2 chuan2* = fishing~boats/vessels).

捕魚業 (*bu4 yu2 ye4* = hunt/catch~fish~industry = fishing industry) targets 鯖 (*qing1*, mackerels), 藍鰭鮪 (*lan2 qi2 wei3* = blue-finned~tunas), 石斑 (*shi2 ban3* = rock~stripes = groupers), 海鱸 (*hai3 lu2* = sea~basses), 蝦 (*xia1*, shrimps/prawns), 蟹 (*xie4*, crabs), 龍蝦 (*long2 xia1* = dragon~prawn = lobsters).

Chinese fable “鷸蚌相爭” (*yu4 bang4 xiang1 zheng1* = sandpiper~clam~mutual~fight), “漁人得利” (*yu2 ren2 de2 li4* = fisher~man~gets~advantage) describes “Sandpiper and Clam in deadlocked fight; Fisherman comes along, grabs both”. Lesson: “If A & B quarrel/fight, C gets the advantage”.