

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 Japanese Invasion



Putonghua pronunciation: *ri4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yat6*

Meanings: sun, day, Japan

Pictogram 日 (dot inside circle) = 太陽 (*tai4 yang2* = ultimate~male-force/yang) = sun. 日出 (*ri4 chu1* = sun~out) = sunrise, 日落 (*ri4 luo4* = sun~down) = sunset. 日 also means day, 日子 (*ri4 zi0* = sun~diminutive) means days.

Japanese myth says sun-god created 日本 (*Ri4 Ben3* = sun~origin = Nippon/Nihon/Japan). 天皇 (*Tian1 Huang2* = heaven~emperor = Tenno/emperor), 將軍 (*jiang1 jun1* = lead~army = Shogun/general) ruled from 京都 (*Jing1 Du1* = capital~city = Kyoto), 東京 (*Dong1 Jing1* = east~capital = Tokyo).

Japan studied Chinese culture, developed 茶道 (*cha2 dao4* = tea~way/philosophy = teism), 武士道 (*wu3 shi4 dao4* = military~soldier/swordsman~way/philosophy = bushido). Modernization/westernization began with 明治維新 (*Ming2 Zhi4 wei2 xin1* = Mei~Ji~maintain~new = Meiji Restoration, 1869-1910+).

by Diana Yue