

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 fatty foods

濃

Putonghua pronunciation: *nong2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *nung4*

Meanings: rich, thick, dense, strong, great, concentrated

濃 (radical 丿 = 水 *shui3*, water) = 濃濃的 (*nong2 nong2 de0* = dense/rich/concentrated): 濃煙 (*nong2 yan1* = dense/thick-smoke), 濃眉 (*nong2 mei2* = dense/bushy-eyebrows), 濃密 (*nong2 mi4* = thick~dense) hair, 濃重 (*nong2 zhong4* = dense~heavy) smell/accents. 濃縮液 (*nong2 suo1 yi4* = dense~contract-liquid) = concentrated solution.

不濃不淡 (*bu4 nong2 bu4 dan4* = not~dense~not~light) = tastes just right, neither bland nor heavy. 香濃 (*nong2 hou4 xiang1 nong2* = fragrant/rich) coffee/cream. 濃情厚意 (*nong2 qing2 hou4 yi4* = deep~affection~thick~sentiment) = deep affection/ friendship.

濃味 (*nong2 wei4* = heavy-taste) = heavily marinated/spiced. 濃油赤醬 (*nong2 you2 chi4 jiang4* = thick~oil~red~paste) describes oily dishes/stews in dark/thick/rich sauce. 濃茶 (*nong2 cha2* = concentrated/strong-tea) cleans the palate.

by Diana Yue