

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 cooking shows



Putonghua pronunciation: *pēng1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *paang1*

Meanings: boil, cook meat or vegetables, cooking, cuisine

烹 (radical 灬, i.e. 水 *sui3*, water or 火 *huo3*, fire) = 烹飪 (*pēng1 ren3* = cook-well-cooked = cooking). 烹調 (*pēng1 tiao2* = cook-adjust) = cook skillfully. 烹茶 (*pēng1 cha2* = cook~tea) = boil water, brew tea. 烹藥 (*pēng1 yao4* = boil~medicine) = concoct Chinese herbal medicine.

Family watches 烹飪節目 (*pēng1 ren4 jie2 mu4* = cook-well-section-item = cooking show) on 電視 (*dian4 shi4* = electric-sight = television). Chef talks about 烹飪心得 (*pēng1 ren4 xin1 de2* = cook~done~heart~achieve = cooking tips), tours 街市 (*jie1 shi4* = street-market = wet market), picks 作料 (*zuo2 liao4* = make~material = cooking ingredients).

Mom boasts: “I am also 烹飪高手 (*pēng1 ren4 gao1 shou3* = cook-well-high-hand = master-cook)!”