

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 change of weather



Putonghua pronunciation: *feng1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fung1*

Meaning: wind, gale, breeze, trend, style, custom

風 (radical 虫 = 蟲 *chong2*, worms/bugs): 微風 (*wei1 feng1* = light-wind/breeze), 強風 (*qiang2 feng1* = strong-wind/gale), 颶風 (*ju4 feng1* = huge/giant-wind = typhoon/hurricane). 風車 (*feng1 che1* = wind-motor = wind-mills) precede 風力發電機 (*feng1 li4 fa1 dian4 ji1* = wind-power-generate-electricity-machine = wind turbines).

Scholar studies country's 風俗 (*feng1 su2* = wind-folk/secular-convention = customs), 風氣 (*feng1 qi4* = trend-air/breath = moral trends/culture). 風水師 (*feng1 shui3 shi1* = wind-water-master = geomancy/feng-shui master) forecasts 風險 (*feng1 xian3* = wind-danger = dangers/risks).

Autumn 刮風 (*gua1 feng1* = scrape/blow-wind = gets windy). 秋風起, 三蛇肥 (*qi1 feng1 qi3, san1 she2 fei2* = autumn-wind-rises/blows, three-snakes-fat = The autumn breeze reminds gourmets: snakes are fat and in season!)