

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 the *nouveau-riche*

炫

Putonghua pronunciation: *xüan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yuen6*

Meanings: bright, glittering, flaring, dazzling, dazzle, flaunt

炫 (radical火 *huo3*, fire + 玄 *xüan2*, deep/abysmal) describes bright/glittering flames/sight. 炫目 (*xüan2 mu4* = glitter-eye) = eye-dazzling. 炫麗 (*xüan2 li4* = glittering-beautiful) describes glamorous clothes/artwork.

暴發戶 (*bao4 fa1 hu4* = abrupt-rich-person = nouveau riche) enjoy driving 名車 (*ming2 che1* = famous-car = brand-name cars) 招搖過市 (*zhao1 yao2 guo4 shi4* = wave~sway~pass~market = swaggering, going flashy in public).

紈袴子弟 (*wan2 ku4 zi3 di4* = silken-trousers-sons-boys = useless sons of wealthy families) enjoy 浮誇 (*fu2 kua1* = floating~exaggerated = flamboyant) life-style, write 微博 (*wei1 bo2* = micro~"b"log-transliterated = microblogs) to炫耀 (*xüan2 yao4* = dazzle~glory = show off) their財富 (*cai2 fu4* = money~wealth = wealth), i.e. 炫富 (*xüan2 fu4* = flaunt~their-wealth).

by Diana Yue