

Character Builder

您好學? 好

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 hiking

伴

Putonghua pronunciation: *ban4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *boon6*

Meanings: companion, company, mate, associate, partner, accompany

伴 (radical 亻 = 人 *ren2*, person) = 陪伴 (*pei2 ban4* = accompany-companionship): 男伴 (*nan2 ban4* = male-companion/escort/beau), 舞伴 (*wu3 ban4* = dancing-partner), 伴遊 (*ban4 you2* = accompany-tour = tour escort), 伴奏 (*ban4 zou4* = accompany-perform = musical/instrumental accompaniment).

有美相伴 (*you3 mei3 xiang1 ban4* = has-beauty-mutual-accompany) = pretty girl's company. Un-ambitious person marries to 圖個伴 (*tu2 ge4 ban4* = desire/have-a-mate). 終生伴侶 (*zhong1 sheng1 ban4 lü3* = end-life-companion-mate/spouse) = lifelong companion/mate/spouse.

States/businesses form 伙伴關係 (*huo3 ban4 guan1 xi4* = mate-companion-relationship = partnership). Hikers welcome 同伴 (*tong2 ban4* = fellow-companions) 結伴同行 (*jie2 ban4 tong2 you2* = form-companinship-together-walk = walk together).

by Diana Yue