

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 romantic love

Putonghua pronunciation: *Shuang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *seung1*

Meanings: two, pair, twin, dual, both, double

雙 (radical 隹 *chou2*, two birds) means pair: 雙數 (*shuang1 shu4* = pairs/even-number), 雙親 (*shuang1 qin1* = pair~dear = parents), 雙手 (*shuang1 shou3* = two hands), 雙邊 (*shuang1 bian1* = two~sides = bilateral). 天下無雙 (*tian1 xia4 wu2 shuang1* = heaven~below~no~pair) = unequalled/unequalled.

雙線行車 (*shuang1 xian4 xing2 che1* = two~lines~move~car) = two-lane traffic. 雙子星座 (*shuang1 zi3 xing1 zuo4* = twin~sons~stars~seat) = Gemini. Athletes play 雙槓 (*shuang1 gang4* = parallel~bars), 雙打 (*shuang1 da3* = pair~hit = doubles). Some people have 雙重 (*shuang1 chong2* = two~double = dual) nationality/personality.

Lovers 出雙入對 (*chu1 shuang1 ru4 dui4* = out~pair~enter~pair = go everywhere together), share 雙人床 (*shuang1 ren2 chuang2* = two~people~bed = double-bed).

by Diana Yue