

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 burning the linked ships

連

Putonghua pronunciation: *lian2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lin4*

Meanings: link, join

連 describes joined things or consecutive events. 連續 (*lian2 xü2* = link~continue) = continuous. 接二連三 (*jie2 er4 lian2 san1* = receive~two~link~three) describes events occurring in a row. 心連心 (*xin1 lian2 xin1* = heart~link~heart) describes firm-hearted comrades/lovers.

連體嬰 (*lian2 ti3 ying1* = link~body~baby) = con-joined/Siamese twins. 連鎖店 (*lian2 xuo3 dian4* = link~lock~shop) = chain-stores. 網上連結 (*wang3 shang4 lian2 jie2* = net~on~link~knot) = links on the Internet.

魏國 (*Wei4 guo2* = Wei-Kingdom) used 連環船 (*lian2 huan2 chuan2* = link~ring~ships = ships chained together) to fight naval battle on 長江 (*Chang2 Jiang1* = Long~River = the Yangtze River). 戰火連天 (*zhan4 huo3 lian2 tian1* = battle~fire~link/meet~sky) describes battle scene with soaring flames.