

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 auctions

估

Putonghua pronunciation: *gu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goo2*

Meanings: estimate, evaluate, assess

估 = 猜估 (*cai1 gu1* = guess~estimate) = make guess. Careful person 估量 (*gu1 liang4* = estimate-volume = assesses) situation before going ahead. Actuarial 估計 (*gu1 ji4* = estimate~compute) rates/risks.

拍賣行 (*pai1 mai4 hang2* = auction~hong/houses) study market, do 估價 (*gu1 jia4* = guess~price = price estimates) on 鮪魚 (*wei3 yü2* = tuna~fish), 土地 (*tu3 di4* = earth~land = land), 古董 (*gu3 dong3* = ancient~deeply-hidden = antiques). Unwise investors 高估 (*gao4 gu1* = high-guess = over-rate/estimate) or 低估 (*di1 gu1* = low-guess = under-rate/estimate) stock prices.

估對 (*gu1 dui4* = guess~right) = 估中 (*gu1 zhong4* = guess~hit-mark) = make right guess. General who 錯估敵情 (*cuo4 gu1 di2 qing2* = wrongly~assesses~enemy's~situation) deserves defeat.

by Diana Yue