

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 witches

迷

Putonghua pronunciation: *mi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mai4*

Meanings: confused, confusing, unclear, infatuate, betwitch

迷 (radical 辶 = 走 *zou3* = go/boat) means unclear/confused/lost. 迷糊 (*mi2 hu2* = confuse~porridge) describes confused perception. 昏迷 (*hun1 mi2* = faint~confused) = coma. Person inside 迷宮 (*mi2 gong1* = confusing~palace = maze/labyrinth) 迷路 (*mi2 lu4* = loses~way).

球迷 (*qiu2 mi2* = ball~infatuated) = soccer/baseball fans. 影迷 (*ying3 mi2* = shadow~infatuated) = movie fans. 迷人 (*mi2 ren2* = confuse/charm~person) describes charming/enchanting person/scenery. Fox-fairies 迷惑 (*mi2 huo4* = confuse~puzzle = bewitch) men. Anthony 迷戀 (*mi2 lian4* = confuse~love = loved as if spell-bound by) Cleopatra.

Sage 指點迷津 (*zhi3 dian3 mi2 jin1* = finger~point~lost~stream~source = advises disoriented/lost souls): Abandon 迷信 (*mi2 xin4* = confused~belief = superstitions)! Don't 沉迷 (*chen2 mi2* = sink~into~infatuated = indulge) in vices!

by Diana Yue