

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 pipe organs



Putonghua pronunciation: *guan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goon2*

Meanings: pipe, tube, reed, canal, duct, woodwind instrument

管 (radical 竹 *zhu2*, bamboo) means tubular pipe/object: 竹管 (*zhu2 guan3* = bamboo~tube/pipeline), 血管 (*xue3 guan3* = blood~tube/vessels), 水管 (*shui3 guan3* = water~pipes), 油管 (*you2 guan3* = oil~pipelines), 褲管 (*ku4 guan3* = trouser~leg). 管道暢通 (*guan3 dao4 chang4 tong1* = pipe~passage~ease~through) describes smooth-flowing traffic/activities. 雙管齊下 (*shuang1 guan3 qi2 xia4* = pair~pipes~together~down) = exerting parallel effort. 一管簫 (*yi1 guan3 xiao1* = a-[tube-of]~flute) = a flute/reed. 管弦樂 (*guan3 xian2 yue4* = reeds~strings~music) means orchestral music.

風琴師 (*feng1 qin2 shi1* = wind~musical-instrument~master = organist) plays on 鍵盤 (*jian4 pan2* = key~boards), steps on 腳鍵盤 (*jiao3 jian4 pan2* = pedal~key~board). Long and short 風琴管 (*feng1 qin2 guan3* = organ pipes) produce sounds.

by Diana Yue