

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 BRIC



Putonghua pronunciation: *ba 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ba 1*

Meanings: first character of “Brazil”-transliterated

巴西 (*Ba Xi 11*) is “Brazil” transliterated. South America’s A, B, C states are 阿根廷 (*A Gen Ting 412* = “Argentina”-transliterated), Brazil, 智利 (*Zhi Li 44* = “Chile”-transliterated).

Brazil was Portugal’s 殖民地 (*zhi min di 224* = sow/multiply~people~land = colony). Brazilians speak 葡語 (*Pu yu 23* = “Por”-of-“Portugal”-transliterated-language = Portuguese).

Brazil 資源豐富 (*zi yuan feng fu 1214* = capital~source~thick~rich = is rich in natural resources), exports 木材 (*mu cai 42* = wood~materials = timber), 礦材 (*kuang cai 42* = mineral~materials), 農產品 (*nong chan pin 223* = agricultural~produce), 咖啡 (*ka fei 11* = “coffee”-transliterated). 比利 (*Bi Li 34* = “Pele”-transliterated) comes from this 足球王國 (*zu qiu wang guo 1222* = foot~ball~kingdom).