

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



Putonghua pronunciation: *qū3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kui1*

Meanings: force, drive, order about, expel, banish

驅 (radical 馬 *ma3*, horse) means drive: 驅馬 (*qū3 ma3* = drive-horse = ride horse), 驅車 (*qū3 che1* = drive~car). Cowboy 驅趕 (*qū3 gan3* = drives~chases) cattle. 驅動力 (*qū3 dong4 li4* = thrust) pushes machines.

Breezes 驅熱 (*qū3 re4* = drive-away~hot-air). Fires 驅寒 (*qū3 han2* = drive-away~cold-air). Police 驅散 (*qū3 shan4* = drive~disperse = drive away) mob. Government 驅逐 (*qū3 zu2* = drive~expel = banishes/expels) traitor. 驅逐艦 (*qū3 zu2 jian4* = drive~expel~battleship) = destroyer.

Rubbing 驅風油 (*qū3 feng1 you2* = drive~wind~oil = mint-camphor oil-like thickened concoction) on skin relieves headaches/rheumatism. 驅魔人 (*qū1 mo2 ren2* = expel~demons~ person = exorcist) 唸咒 (*nian4 zhou4* = chant~curse = pronounced magical utterances) to save demon-possessed victim.