

Character Builder

您好學? 呀

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 relatives

親

Putonghua pronunciation: qin1

Cantonese pronunciation: chan1

Meaning: parent, family, marriage, close, kin, blood-relation, dear, in person, kiss

親 (radical 見 *jian2*, see/utmost) means close-related/dear. 雙親 (*shuang1 qin1* = pair-close/dear) = parents. 父親 (*fu4 qin1* = father-close/dear) = 親爹 (*qin1 die1* = blood-related/real-father = 爸爸 *ba4 ba0*). 母親 (*mu3 qin1* = mother-close/dear) = 親娘 (*qin1 niang2* = blood-related/real-mother = 媽媽 *ma1 ma0*). 親人 (*qin1 ren2* = close/dear-people/ones) = family member(s).

Bachelor and spinster 相親 (*xiang4 qin1* = view-close/dear = meet, view/assess each other as marriage-candidate, 成親 (*cheng2 qin1* = succeed/complete-close/dear = marry), enlarge 親戚 (*qin1 qi1* = close/dear-relative = cousins/relatives) circle through marriage.

可親 (*ke3 qin1* = can-close/dear) describes amiable person. Lovers 親嘴 (*qin1 zui3* = close/dear-mouth = kiss), call each other 親愛的 (*qin1 ai4 de0* = close/dear-love-adjectival = dear/darling).

by Diana Yue