

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 group tours



Putonghua pronunciation: *tuán2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tuén4*

Meaning: round, spherical, lump, cluster, roll, group, association, regiment

團 (radical 口 *wei2*, surround) means round/lump/group: 飯團 (*fán4 tuán2* = cooked-rice-lump = rice-ball), 劇團 (*jù2 tuán2* = drama-group/troupe), 團體 (*tuán2 tǐ3* = group-body/association), 軍團 (*jūn1 tuán2* = army-regiment), 集團 (*jí2 tuán2* = assembled-group = business/military group), 團隊精神 (*tuán2 duì4 jīng1 shén2* = group-team-essence-spirit) = group spirit.

Kids play 團團轉 (*tuán2 tuán2 zhuǎn4* = round-round-turn = round-and-round-we-go). Allies 團結 (*tuán2 jié2* = cluster-together-tie/unite = support each other). Scattered siblings eventually 大團圓 (*dà4 tuán2 yuán2* = big-round-circle = are all together/reunited).

旅行團 (*lǚ2 xíng2 tuán2* = tour-travel-group) = group tour. Agents slash 團費 (*tuán2 fèi4* = tour-prices), promote 十天北歐團 (*shí2 tiān1 běi3 ōu1 tuán2* = ten-sky/day-north-"Eu"-rope-transliterated-group = 10-day Scandinavian tour).

by Diana Yue