

Character Builder

您好學？

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 comradeship



Putonghua pronunciation: **tong2**

Cantonese pronunciation: **tung4**

Meaning: same, similar, co-, fellow-, uniform, unified

同 (radical 冂 *kou3*, mouth) means 同樣 (*tong2 yang4* = same/similar-type/condition), 相同 (*xiang1 tong2* = mutually-same): 同時 (*tong2 shi2* = same-time/simultaneous), 同意 (*tong2 yi4* = same-idea/intent = consent), 同情 (*tong2 qing2* = same-emotion = sympathy), 不同 (*bu4 tong2* = un-like = different).

同學 (*tong2 xue2* = same-study) = fellow-students. 同事 (*tong2 xhi4* = same-work) = colleagues. 同性戀 (*tong2 xing4 lian3* = same-sex-love) = homosexuality/lesbianism. 世界大同 (*shi4 jie4 da4 tong2* = world-territory-big-same) = world unity/harmony.

同志 (*tong2 zhi4* = same-aim = comrades) are 同路人 (*tong2 lu4 ren2* = same-road-people = like-minded people/partners), must 求同存異 (*qiu2 tong2 cun2 yi4* = seek-agreement-while-maintaining-differences), never 黨同伐異 (*dang3 tong2 fa3 yi4* = gang-up-with-like-minded-buddies-and-attack-dissenters).