

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

俄

Putonghua pronunciation: e 2

Cantonese pronunciation: ngoh 4

Meanings: first character of “Russia”-transliterated

俄羅斯 (*E Luo Si 221*) is “Russia” transliterated. Russians speak 俄語 (*E yu 23* = Russian~language), read 普希金 (*Pu Xi Jin 311* = “Pushkin”-transliterated), are 東正教 (*Dong Zheng Jiao 144* = Eastern~Orthodox~Church/religion) Christians, 沙皇 (*Sha huang 12* = “Czar”-transliterated-emperor) ruled Russia until 十月革命 (*shi yue ge ming 2424* = ten/tenth-moon/month-change~fate = October Revolution, 1917) led by 列寧 (*Lie Ning 42* = “Lenin”-transliterated). In 1991 USSR 解體 (*jie ti 23* = loosen/free~body = disintegrated).

Russia sells 油 (*you 2* = oil/petroleum), 氣 (*qi 4* = natural-gas), 太空科技 (*tai kong ke ji 4114* = ether~sky/space~science~technology = space technology), keeps big 國防預算 (*guo fang yu suan 2244* = state~defense~prepare/projected~calculation = defense budget).