

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 pipe organs



Putonghua pronunciation: *jù4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gui6*

Meanings: huge, gigantic, giant, large amount

巨 (originally meaning ruler) means huge/gigantic: 巨型 (*jù4 xing2* = gigantic~size), 巨石 (*jù4 shi2* = huge~boulder), 巨響 (*jù4 xiang3* = loud/great~sound). Fairytale features 巨人 (*jù4 ren2* = giants), 巨龍 (*jù4 long2* = huge~dragon).

Muralist paints 巨作 (*jù4 zuo2* = huge~work) depicting battle-scene 巨細無遺 (*jù4 xi4 wu2 yi2* = large~small~no~omit = in full detail). Undergoing post-war 巨變 (*jù4 bian4* = huge~changes/calamities), country budgets 巨資 (*jù4 zi1* = huge~capital) to launch 艱巨 (*jian1 jù4* = difficult/strenuous~big) reconstruction projects.

管風琴 (*guan3 feng1 qin2* = pipe~organ) is 巨大 (*jù4 da4* = huge~grand) instrument housed in 大教堂 (*da4 jiao1 tang2* = big~religion~hall = cathedral). J. S. Bach is 巨匠 (*jù4 jiang4* = great master) of organ music.

by Diana Yue