

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 leaders



Putonghua pronunciation: *zhu3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chu1*

Meaning: master, host, independent, main, sovereign, active, commanding

主 (dot on 王 *wang2*, king) means 主要 (*zhu3 yao4* = main-important): 君主 (*jun1 zhu3* = monarch-sovereign), 主人 (*zhu3 ren2* = master-person = lord/master/host), 主席 (*zhu3 xi2* = principal-chair = chairman), 主管 (*zhu3 guan3* = principal-in-charge), 物主 (*wu4 zhu3* = thing's-owner), 主食 (*zhu3 shi2* = main-eat/food = staple).

Christians worship 天主 (*tian1 zhu3* = heavenly-lord = God), 主耶穌 (*zhu3 ye1 su1* = lord-"Je-su"-transliterated = Lord Jesus). Thinker coins 主義 (*zhu3 yi4* = principal-meaning = school of thought/"ism").

Intelligent person has 主意 (*zhu3 yi4* = self-conceived-idea), 主動 (*zhu3 dong4* = self-move/act = positively/voluntarily) raises 主張 (*zhu3 zhang1* = independent-opinion). Strong country 主宰 (*zhu3 zai3* = controls-governs/dictates) world affairs, becomes 盟主 (*meng2 zhu3* = allies' leader).

by Diana Yue