

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 hope

Putonghua pronunciation: *hou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hou5*

Meaning: thick, thickness, rich, heavy, generous, respectful

厚 (radical 厂 *han3*, hills/stones) means 厚實 (*hou4 shi2* = thick-solid): 厚牆 (*hou4 qiang2* = thick-walls), 厚皮 (*hou4 pi2* = thick-skin/hide), 厚繭 (*hou4 jian3* = thick-caluses) on guitarist's hands, 醇厚 (*chun2 hou4* = matured-rich) flavor of wine. 厚重 (*hou4 zhong4* = solid-heavy) describes considerate/steady/reliable person's character/style.

Entrepreneur has 豐厚 (*feng1 hou4* = rich-massive) fortune, 厚待 (*hou4 dai4* = generously/kindly-treats) employees. 厚臉皮 (*hou4 lian3 pi2* = thick-face's-skin = cheeky/shameless) official takes briber's 厚禮 (*hou4 li3* = expensive-presents).

Teacher likes 厚道 (*hou4 dao4* = kind-way = kind/considerate/forgiving) disciple, 寄以厚望 (*ji4 yi3 hou4 wang4* = rest-with-thick-hope = puts high hopes on him). 忠厚 (*zhong1 hou4* = loyal-kind/considerate/honest) person appreciates benefactor's 厚愛 (*hou4 ai4* = generous-love/kindness).

by Diana Yue