

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

道

Putonghua pronunciation: *dao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *do4*

Meaning: way, road, path, method, approach, direction, truth, wisdom

道 (radical 走 *chuo4*, walk) means 道路 (*dao4 lu4* = path-way/road): 行人道 (*xing2 ren2 dao4* = walk-people-road = pavement), 國道 (*guo2 dao4* = national-highway), imperial 馳道 (*chi2 dao4* = gallop-road = horse-chariot/carriage-road), train/planet's 軌道 (*gui3 dao4* = track-way = railroad-tracks/orbit).

道家 (*dao4 jia1* = Daoist-school = Daoism), 儒道 (*ru2 dao4* = Confucian-ism), 佛道 (*fo2 dao3* = Buddh-ism) are Chinese intellectual traditions. 老子 (*Lao3 zi3*, 5th century BC) wrote 道德經 (the *Dao4 De2 Jing1* = way-virtue-classic), explained 道 (*dao4*, nature's way), 德 (*de2*, human virtue).

正道 (*zheng4 dao4* = right-approach = righteous/decent) people 講道理 (*jiang3 dao4 li3* = talk-way-reason = treat others reasonably), 不霸道 (*bu4 ba4 dao4* = no-bully's-way = don't bully others).

by Diana Yue