

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



Putonghua pronunciation: *yin 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yan 3*

Meanings: first character of “India”-transliterated

印度 (*Yin Du 44* = “India” transliterated)'s 古文明 (*gu wen ming 322* = ancient~writing~bright/enlighten = ancient civilization) produced 印度教 (*Yin Du jiao 444* = “Hindu”-transliterated~ religion = Hinduism), 瑜珈 (*yu jia 21* = “yoga”-transliterated), Buddhism.

India launched 獨立運動 (*du li yun dong 2444* = single/independent~stand~move~act = independence movement) under 甘地 (*Gan Di 14* = “Gandhi”-transliterated), split with Islamic 巴基斯坦 (*Ba Ji Si Tan 1113* = “Pakistan”-transliterated), ended British rule in 1947.

India has advanced 信息科技 (*xin xi ke ji 4114* = message~information~science~technology = information technology), but 賤民 (*jian min 42* = cheap/worthless~people = the untouchables) still exist under 種姓制度 (*zhong xing zhi du 3444* = seed/birth~surname/lineage~system = caste system).