

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 barbecues

野

Putonghua pronunciation: **ye3**

Cantonese pronunciation: **ye5**

Meanings: untamed, uncivilized, wild, wilderness

野 (radical 里 *li3*, settlement) = wild/rough/unruly: 粗野 (*cu3 ye3* = rough-wild), 野蠻 (*ye3 man2* = wild-rough/barbaric), 野獸 (*ye3 shou4* = wild-animal), 野心 (*ye3 xin1* = wild/unruly-heart = ambition).

野火 (*ye3 huo3* = wild-fires) consume 野草 (*ye3 cao3* = wild-grass), devastate 原野 (*yuan2 ye3* = plain-wild = wild plains). 野孩子 (*ye3 hai2 zi0* = wild-child-diminutive = homeless/truant kids) are 野性難馴 (*ye3 xing4 nan2 shun2* = wild-nature-difficult-tame = hard to tame/pacify/educate).

郊野公園 (*jiao1 ye3 gong4 yuan4* = countryside-wilderness-public-park = country parks) have sites for 野火會 (*ye3 huo3 hui4* = wild-fire-assembly = barbecue parties). Gourmets love 野味 (*ye3 wei4* = wild-taste = game), e.g. 野雞 (*ye3 ji1* = wild-hens = pheasants).

by Diana Yue