

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 bank accounts



Putonghua pronunciation: *hu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *woo6*

Meaning: door or window panel, household

Pictogram 戶 means window/door panel or household: 門戶 (*men2 hu4* = door-panels/door), 戶外 (*hu4 wai4* = doors-out = outdoors), 住戶 (*zhu4 hu4* = residential-household), 商戶 (*shang1 hu4* = commercial-unit).

Migrant acquires 戶籍 (*hu4 ji2* = residence-registration), 安家落戶 (*an1 jia1 luo4 hu4* = place-family-descend-household = settles family), becomes 一戶 (*yi1 hu4* = one-household) of city's 千門萬戶 (*qian1 men2 wan4 hu4* = thousand-doors-ten-thousand-households = large population).

Bank's 客戶 (*ke4 hu4* = guest-household = customer) has 往來戶口 (*wang3 lai2 hu4 kou3* = go-come-account-mouth = current account), 儲蓄戶口 (*chu3 xu4 hu4 kou3* = savings-account). 大戶 (*da4 hu4* = big-customer) forgets 休眠賬戶 (*xiu1 mian2 zhang4 hu4* = rest-sleep-accounts-household = dormant accounts).

by Diana Yue