

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: *zhong 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jung 1*

Meanings: middle, central, balanced;
first character of “India”-transliterated

中國 (*Zhong Guo 12* = Middle-Kingdom/Country) is home of 中華民族 (*Zhong Hua min zu 1222* = Middle-Flower~people-race = the Chinese race). 中華文化 (*Zhong Hua wen hua 1224* = Middle-Flower~writing~teach/transform = the Chinese civilization) began in 中原 (*zhong yuan 12* = middle-plains = central China). Feudal dynasties 秦 (*Qin 2*), 漢 (*Han 4*), 唐 (*Tang 2*), 宋 (*Song 4*), 元 (*Yuan 2*), 明 (*Ming 2*), 清 (*Qing 1*) ruled China up to 1911.

In 1949 中華民國 *Zhong Hua Min Guo 1222* = Middle-Flower~People~State = the Republic of China, ROC) was replaced by 中華人民共和國 (*Zhong Hua Ren Min Gong He Guo 1222422* = Middle-Flower~People~Together~Harmony~State = the People's Republic of China, PRC).