

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 Peach Blossom Fount

迷

Putonghua pronunciation: *mi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mai4*

Meanings: fascinate, confused, charmed, unconscious, hallucination

迷 (radical 辶 = 走 *zou3* = go/boat) = 迷失 (*mi2 shi1* = confused-lost): 迷幻藥 (*mi2 huan4 yao4* = confused~hallucination~drug = LSD), 昏迷 (*hun1 mi2* = faint-unconscious = coma), 迷信 (*mi2 xin4* = confused-belief = superstition).

Fox-fairies 迷惑 (*mi2 huo4* = confuse~hallucinate = bewitch) men. Star's 迷人 (*mi2 ren2* = charm~people = charming/enchanting) smile makes 影迷 (*ying3 mi2* = shadow~fascinate = movie fans) 入迷 (*ru4 mi2* = enter~fascination = spell-bound). 迷宮 (*mi2 gong1* = confusing~palace) = maze/labyrinth.

漁人 (*yu2 fu1* = fisher~man) rowed up-stream seeking 桃源 (*tao2 yuan2* = peach~source = stream's source amidst peach-trees), 迷路 (*mi2 lu4* = lost-his-way). Idiom 指點迷津 (*zhi3 dian3 mi2 jin1* = finger~point~lost~stream-source) = counsel/enlighten muddle-headed advice-seeker.

by Diana Yue