

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 royal weddings

族

Putonghua pronunciation: *zu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *juk6*

Meanings: tribe, clan

族 = 種族 (*zhong3 zu2* = seed~clan = race), 族群 (*zu2 qun2* = clan~group). Chinese population includes 漢族 (*Han4 zu2* = Han-race), 滿族 (*Man3 zu2* = Manchurian-race), 蒙族 (*Meng2 zu2* = Mongolian~race), 回族 (*Hui2 zu2* = Uyghur~race), 藏族 (*Zang4 zu2* = Tibetan~race), 少數民族 (*shao3 shu4 min2 zu2* = few~number~people~tribe = minority races).

水族 (*shui3 zu2* = water~tribe) = aquatic life. 上班族 (*shang4 ban1 zu2* = mount~shift~tribe) = office employees. 名門望族 (*ming2 men2 wang4 zu2* = name~door~fame~clan) = distinguished clan/family.

貴族 (*gui4 zu2* = noble~clan = nobility) exploits 中產階級 (*zhong1 chan3 jie1 ji2* = middle~asset~step~tier = middleclass), 勞動階級 (*lao2 dong4 jie1 ji2* = toil~move~setp~tier = labor class).