

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 reporters

記

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gei3*

Meanings: mark, remember, memorize, record

記 (radical 言 *yan2*, words) = 記憶 (*ji4 yi1* = remember~recollect = reminiscences/recollections), 記錄 (*ji4 lu4* = note~record = record). Pepsy's 日記 (*ri4 ji4* = day~record = diary) and Marco Polo's 遊記 (*you2 ji4* = travel~records) are equally famous.

Dog 記得 (*ji4 de2* = remember~can = recognizes) master's smell. Stenographer takes 速記 (*su1 ji4* = quick~jot-down = shorthand). Alzheimer patient 忘記 (*wang4 ji4* = forget~remember = forgets) many things.

記者 (*ji4 zhe3* = record~person = reporters) conduct 訪問 (*fang3 wen4* = visit~ask = interviews), 逐字記錄 (*zu2 zi4 ji4 lu4* = each~word~note~record = takes verbatim notes). 戰地記者 (*zhan4 di4 ji4 zhe3* = war~land~reporter = war correspondent) 記下 (*ji4 xia4* = notes down) civilian killings.