

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

提

Putonghua pronunciation: *ti2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tai4*

Meaning: lift, hold, carry, raise, mention, take, extract

提 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand) means lift/bring up: 提出 (*ti2 chu1* = raise/suggest-announce): 提議 (*ti2 yi4* = raise-propose/proposal), 提名 (*ti2 ming2* = raise-name = nominate/nomination). Writer 提筆 (*ti2 bi3* = takes-up-pen), sips coffee to 提神 (*ti2 shen2* = stimulate-thoughts).

手提電腦 (*shou3 ti2 dian4 nao3* = hand-held-electric/electronic-brain) = portable computer/laptop. 提款機 (*ti2 kuan3 ji1* = take-money-machine) = automated/automatic teller machine = ATM.

Banks 提供 (*ti2 gong1* = raise-supply = provide) loans/mortgages, 提醒 (*ti2 xing3* = raise-awake = remind) borrowers to 提防 (*ti2 fang2* = remind-guard = beware): may 提前 (*ti2 qian2* = move-earlier) 提高 (*ti2 gao1* = raise-higher) interest rates. Speculators 提心吊膽 (*ti2 xin1 diao4 dan3* = lift-heart-suspend-ga-bladder = get scary).

by Diana Yue