

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 about orchestras

(radical 竹 *zu2* = bamboo)

Putonghua pronunciation: *guan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goon2*

Meanings: tube, pipe

管 = tube/conduit: 氣管 (*qi4 guan3* = air~tube), 水管 (*shui2 guan3* = water~pipe), 飲管 (*yin3 guan3* = drinking~straw). 油管 (*you2 guan3* = oil~tube = oil pipelines) carry oil from oilfields. Spies collect intelligence through secret 管道 (*guan3 dao4* = conduit~road = channels).

血管堵塞 (*xue4 guan3 du3 sai1* = blood~vessel~block~jam = blocked blood vessel) causes stroke. 雙管齊下 (*shuang1 guan3 qi2 xia4* = pair~tubes~together~down) means trying two ways/solutions simultaneously.

簫 (*xiao1*, flute), 笛 (*di2*, reedless pipe), 單簧管 (*dan1 huang2 guan3* = single~reed~strip~pipe = clarinet), 雙簧管 (*shuang1 huang2 guan3* = double~reed~strip~pipe = oboe) are 木管樂器 (*mu4 guan3 yue4 qi4* = wood~tube~music~instruments = woodwinds). 管風琴 (*guan3 feng1 qin2* = pipe~wind~lyre) = pipe organ.