

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 leaders

服

Putonghua pronunciation: *fu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fuk6*

Meaning: defer, obey, adore, accept, submissive, serve

服 (radical 月 = 肉 *rou4*, flesh) means serve/convinced/deferent. Sheep are 馴服 (*xun4 fu2* = tame-obedient). Maid 服侍 (*fu2 shi4* = serves-waits-on) mistress. 服務員 (*fu2 wu4 yuan2* = serve-chores-member) = waiter/attendant.

Soldier 服從 (*fu2 cong2* = obeys-follows) orders, 佩服 (*pei4 fu2* = respects/adores) general. Loser 服輸 (*fu2 shu1* = accept- defeat = admits he is inferior/defeated). Decision 難以服眾 (*nan2 yi3 fu2 zong4* = difficult-to-convince-majority = cannot win overall popularity/acceptance) because some people 不服氣 (*bu4 fu2 qi4* = no-pacify-gas = aren't persuaded/convinced/appeased).

Benevolent ruler 以德服人 (*yi3 de2 fu2 ren2* = with-virtue-inspire/awe-people = wins people's respect/admiration with his kind heart/deeds), 令人折服 (*ling4 fen2 zhe2 fu2* = make- people-bend-respect/admire = makes others bend over in respect/awe).

by Diana Yue