

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 plans and timetables

Putonghua pronunciation: *hua4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *waak6*

Meaning: scratch, draw, sweep, plan, project, incorporate into, divide, uniform

劃 (radical 刂 = 刀 *dao1*, knife/blade) means scratch/draw. Shaving-blade 劃傷 (*hua4 shang1* = scratch-wound = cuts) face. Lightning 劃破 (*hua4 po4* = scratch-break = makes cracks across) the sky. Bordering countries 劃界 (*hua4 jie4* = draw/define-boundary).

Broken-up couple 劃破臉 (*hua4 po4 lian3* = scratch-break-face = openly quarrel), 劃清界限 (*hua4 qing1 jie4 xian4* = draw-clear-border-limit = draws clear-cut division-line), announces relationship 劃上句號 (*hua4 shang4 ju4 hao4* = draw-on-sentence-symbol = writes full-stop = is finished).

Company 計劃 (*ji4 hua4* = plans-projects/prepares) going public, CEO 策劃 (*ce4 hua4* = policy-draw/regulate = leads/masterminds) 劃一 (*hua4 yi1* = draw-one = uniform/streamline) accounting procedures, earnings 劃入 (*hua4 ru4* = incorporated-into) seed capital, 劃分 (*hua4 fen1* = draw/define-divide)

by Diana Yue