

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 heroes

將

Putonghua pronunciation: *jiang1, jiang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jeung3*

Meaning: general, chief, leader, lead, chess-piece

將 (radical 卩 *pan2*, territory/border) means 將軍 (*jiang1 jūn1* = leader-of~army = general), 將領 (*jiang4 ling3* = general~leader = various ranks of army-chiefs). 五星上將 (*wu3 xing1 shang4 jiang4* = five~stars~top~general) = five-star general.

將帥之才 (*jiang4 shuai4 zhi1 cai2* = general~admiral~'s~talent) means person/hero with leadership talents. In Chinese chess, 將 (*jiang4*, general) 帥 (*shuai4*, admiral) each heads one side. The Chinese say “將軍!” (*jiang1 jūn1* = charge~army) for “Chess!” Beware of opponent 將你一軍 (*jiang1 ni3 yi1 jūn1* = chess~you~once = challenge/crush you with hostile move/question/demand).

Boss sighs: 千金易得, 一將難求 (*qian1 jin1 yi4 de2, yi1 jiang4 nan2 qiu2* = thousand~gold~easy-obtain, one~general~difficult~seek = Even millions can't buy me a good CEO!)