

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 World Cup matches

勝

Putonghua pronunciation: *sheng4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sing3*

Meanings: win, conquer, victory

勝 = 贏 (*ying2*, win/defeat) = 勝利 (*sheng4 li4* = win~advantage = victory): 大勝 (*da4 sheng4* = big~win = landslide victory), 僅勝 (*jin3 sheng4* = just/narrow~win = marginal victory), 慘勝 (*can3 sheng4* = tragic~win = bitter victory).

不分勝負 (*bu4 fen1 sheng4 fu4* = no~distinguish~win~lose) describes a tied match. Weak team 戰勝 (*zhan4 sheng4* = fight~win = beats/defeats) strong team is 爆冷門 (*bao4 leng3 men2* = burst~cold-door = unforeseeable/undeductible outcome). Adult defeating kid is 勝之不武 (*sheng4 zhi1 bu2 wu3* = win~it~not~martial = unfair/un-chivalrous victory).

Brazil 勝算在握 (*sheng4 suan4 zai4 wo1* = win~estimation~in~grasp = is sure about winning), 旗開得勝 (*qi2 kai1 de2 sheng4* = flag~unfurl~obtain~victory = easily wins first battle/match).