

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 political parties



Putonghua pronunciation: *dou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *dau36*

Meanings: fight, compete, vie with, struggle

Pictogram 鬥 shows two combating men/axes. 鬥士 (*dou4 shi4* = fight~man = fighter) needs 鬥志 (*dou4 zhi4* = combat~will = zeal/will to fight). Gladiators 角鬥 (*jiao3 dou4* = horn/race~fight = wrestle/fight). 鬥牛 (*dou4 niu2* = fight~ox) = bull-fight. 決鬥 (*jue2 dou4* = determine/final~fight) = duel. Spy/sleuth 鬥智 (*dou4 zhi4* = compete~wisdom = uses brains/plots to outsmart/beat opponent).

In 1946-49 Civil War, 國民黨 (*guo2 min2 dang3* = state~people~party = Nationalist Party) and 共產黨 (*gong4 chan2 dang3* = common/share~property~party = Communist Party) 惡鬥 (*e4 dou4* = bad~fight = fought vehemently).

After 1978, Communist China stopped preaching 階級鬥爭 (*jie1 ji2 dou4 zheng1* = tier~class~fight~quarrel = class struggle) because 內鬥 (*nei4 dou4* = internal/domestic feuds/antagonism) weakens country's strength.