

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 passive waiting

株

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jue1*

Meanings: stump, stem, plant, plant's roots above ground

株 (radical 木 *mu4*, wood/tree) means mature plant, its exposed roots, or its stub/stump/stem/trunk.

株 is also 量詞 (*liang4 ci2* = quantity/measure~word/unit used before noun to indicate noun's nature/shape. Example: 株 in 一株松 (*yi1 zhu1 song1* = a-plant-pine = a pine-tree), 條 (*tiao2*, line) in 一條河 (*yi1 tiao2 he2* = a-line-river = a river), 座 (*zuo4*, block) in 兩座山 (*san1 zuo4 shan1* = two~blocks~hills = two hills), 塊 (*kuai4*, piece) in 一塊地 (*yi1 kuai4 di4* = a-piece-of~land), 頭 (*tou2*, head) in 十頭牛 (*shi2 tou2 niu2* = ten~heads-of~cattle).

Verb 株連 (*zhu1 lian2* = plant-roots~connect) means involve unfavorably. Treason convict 株連九族 (*zhu1 lian2 jiu3 zu2* = plant-roots~connect~nine~clans = brings blame/punishment on his entire extended family).