

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 winter clothes

送

Putonghua pronunciation: *song4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *song3*

Meanings: deliver, bring, dispatch, offer, give away

送 has radical 辶 (= 走 *zou3*, walk/go). Postman 送信 (*song4 xin4* = delivers~letters). Housewife 送出 (*song4 chu1* = gives~away) old winter clothes. Philanthropist 贈送 (*zeng4 song4* = donates~ gives) supplies to earthquake victims.

Shop promotes 買一送一 (*mai3 yi1 song4 yi1* = buy~one~give~one = “buy one get one”). 送禮 (*song4 li3* = deliver~rite/present) = offer gifts/bribes. New Year bells 送舊迎新 (*song4 jiu4 ying2 xin1* = usher-out~old~welcome~new = ring out the old ring in the new).

Drug addict 斷送前途 (*duan4 song4 qian2 tu2* = cut-off~yield~front~road = ruins his own future). 送上門 (*song4 shang4 men2* = deliver~up-to~door) describes hotel's room-service or stupid/naive prey walking into predator's trap/arms. 送死 (*song4 si3* = *deliver~die*) = take suicidal action/move.

by Diana Yue