

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 foreign maids

傭

Putonghua pronunciation: *yong1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yung4*

Meanings: hired, labourer, servant

傭 (radical 亻 = 人 *ren2*, person) means hired labourer/servant. In 僱傭關係 (*gu4 yong1 guan1 xi4* = employer-employee-relationship), 僱主 (*gu4 zhu3* = employ-master = employer) hires 傭工 (*yong1 gong1* = hired-workers), pays 傭酬 (*yong1 chou2* = work-reward = wages).

傭耕 (*yong1 geng1* = hired-laborer-till-soil) = hired farmer, 傭傭兵 (*gu4 yong1 bing1* = hired-work-soldier) = mercenary soldier. 家傭 (*jia1 yong1* = home-hired-worker) = domestic servant/helper.

外傭 (*wai4 yong1* = foreign-servants) are usually 住家女傭 (*zhu4 jia1 nu3 yong1* = live-in-female-servants): 菲傭 (*fei1 yong1* = "Phi"-hippina-transliterated-maids), 泰傭 (*tai4 yong1* = "Thai"-transliterated-maids), 印傭 (*yin4 yong1* = "In"-donesian-transliterated-maids) doing 一脚踢 (*yi1 jiao3 til* = Cantoanese "yat1 geuk3 tek3" = one-foot-kick = all household chores).

by Diana Yue