

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 barbecues



Putonghua pronunciation: **wei2**

Cantonese pronunciation: **wai4**

Meanings: surround, enclose, encircle, encircled, besieged

Pictogram 圍 (radical 囗 **wei2**, country, surround) means 包圍 (**bao1 wei2** = wrap-surround = encircle): 圍裙 (**wei2 qūn2** = surround-skirt = apron), 圍脖 (**wei2 bó2** = surround-neck = 圍巾 **wei2 jīn1** = wrapping-scarf), 圍欄 (**wei2 lán2** = enclosing-fence), 圍牆 (**wei2 qiáng2** = enclosing-wall). Planets 圍繞 (**wei2 rào3** = encircle-turn-around) the sun.

圍困 (**wei2 kùn4** = surround-entrap) = siege/blockade. Invaders 圍城 (**wei2 chéng2** = besiege-city/castle), soldiers inside 突圍 (**tū1 wei2** = jut-out-siege = charge/break through siege). China defies enemies' 圍堵 (**wei2 dǔ3** = enclose-block = containment). 解圍 (**jiě3 wei2** = untie/undo-siege/containment = siege lifted) also means relieved from threat/embarrassment.

Having barbecue, we 圍爐夜話 (**wei2 lu2 ye4 hua4** = surround-grill/fire-pot-night-talk = have night chat around grill/pit-fire).

by Diana Yue