

Character Builder

您好學? 呀

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 first-home purchases

觀

Putonghua pronunciation: *guan1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goon1*

Meaning: watch, view, vista, observe, monitor, examine, inspect, opinion

觀 (radical 見 *jian4*, see/watch) = 觀看 (*guan1 kan4* = watch-see/look-at), 觀點 (*guan1 dian3* = view-point). 觀眾 (*guan1 zhong4* = watch-crowd) = audience. Frog/person who 坐井觀天 (*zuo4 jing3 guan1 tian1* = sits-in-well-looks-at-sky) has narrow 世界觀 (*shi4 jie4 guan1* = world-border-view = world view).

觀光團 (*guan1 guang1 tuan2* = see-scenery-group = tourists) 參觀 (*can1 guan1* = join-see = tour) ceramics factory, 觀摩 (*guan1 mo2* = observe-study) technology, 嘆為觀止 (*tan4 wei2 guan1 zhi3* = sigh/exclaim-as-view's-utmost = think it's fabulous).

House-viewer likes apartment's 景觀 (*jing3 guan1* = vista-view) but remains 客觀 (*ke4 guan1* = guest-see = objective), 觀察 (*guan1 cha2* = watches-monitors) market, 觀望 (*guan1 wang4* = watch-look-ahead = observes without committing).

by Diana Yue