

Character Builder

您好學？

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 Han people

擴

Putonghua pronunciation: *kuo4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kong3*

Meaning: expand, extend, broaden, augment, enlarge, aggravate, stretch, spread

擴 (radical 扌 = 手, hand/arm) means expand/enlarge. Auditorium 擴建 (*kuo4 jian4* = expand-build = builds more structures), 擴充 (*kuo4 chong1* = expands-adds) equipments, adds 擴音器 (*kuo4 yin1 qi4* = augment-sound-equipment = amplifiers),

血管擴大 (*xue3 guan3 kuo4 da4* = blood-vessels-widen-enlarge) = vasodilation, 癌擴散 (*ai2 kuo4 san4* = cancer-grow-spread) = spreading of cancer cells. 核擴散 (*he2 kuo4 san4* = nuclear-expand-spread) = nuclear weapons' proliferation.

Han empire (202-220 BC) 擴軍 (*kuo4 jun1* = expanded-army), 擴張版圖 (*kuo4 zhang1 ban3 tu2* = expand-stretch-page-picture = expanded territories), 西擴 (*xi1 kuo4* = westwards-expanded), defeated the 匈奴 (*Xiong1 Nu2* = Xiongnu, nomadic tribes in current Mongolia). European Union 東擴 (*dong1 kuo4* = east-expand = extends influence eastwards).

by Diana Yue