

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

Putonghua pronunciation: *rong2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *zung4*

Meaning: mix, melt, dissolve, merge, blend, flow, pleasant

融 (radical 虫 = 蟲 *chong2*, worm/bug) means 融和 (*rong2 he2* = warm-harmonious/pleasant). 圓融 (*yuan2 rong2* = round/smooth-receptive) person can 通融 (*tong1 rong2* = through-melt = contain/tolerate) others. Couple in 融洽 (*rong2 qia4* = warm-harmonious) relationship feel 其樂融融 (*qi2 le4 rong2 rong2* = its-joy-warm-warm = warmth, enjoyment, happiness).

Economist watches 金融市場 (*jin1 rong2 shi4 chang3* = gold/money-current-market-place = financial market)'s 融資 (*rong2 zi1* = merge-capital = financing) activities, 融會貫通 (*rong2 hui4 guan4 tong1* = melt-understand-through-pass = links facts/points, understands thoroughly).

Buddhism and Han/Chinese-culture 融合 (*rong2 he2* = mix-merge), 融入 (*rong2 ru4* = blend-into) Chinese society. Misunderstandings 消融 (*xiao1 rong2* = shrink-melt = melt away) like glaciers 融化 (*rong2 hua4* = melting-dissolving).

by Diana Yue