

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 missing persons

蹤

Putonghua pronunciation: *zong1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jung1*

Meanings: trail, track

Noun 蹤 = 足 (*zu2*, foot) + 從 (*cong2*, follow). 蹤跡 (*zong1 ji1* = track~trace) means person's/animal's tracks. 失蹤 (*shi1 zong1* = lose~tracks) = disappear. Unrecovered stolen property 無影無蹤 (*wu2 ying3 wu2 zong1* = no~shadow~no~tracks = simply vanished).

Hunter trails 獸蹤 (*shou4 zong1* = animal's~tracks). Detective 追蹤 (*zui1 zong1* = pursue~tracks = pursues) suspect to find 賊蹤 (*zei2 zong1* = thief's~tracks/whereabouts). Submarine 跟蹤 (*gen1 zong1* = follow~tracks = tails) carrier. MI6 traces 諜蹤 (*die2 zong1* = spy~tracks = spy's whereabouts).

芳蹤杳杳 (*fang1 zong1 yiao3 yiao3* = flower's~tracks~gone~gone) = "Ah, she's nowhere to be found!" 綠野仙蹤 (*lü ye3 xian1 zong1* = green~wild~meadows~fairies'tracks) is poetic Chinese title of movie The Wizard of Oz.

by Diana Yue