

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 mass shootings



Putonghua pronunciation: *qiang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *cheung1*

Meanings: gun, (spear, lance)

槍 (radical 木 *mu4*, wood) may mean wooden lance/spear, but 槍聲 (*qiang1 sheng1* = gun-sound) means sound of gunshot. 手槍 (*shou3 qiang1* = hand-gun) = pistol. 長槍 (*chang2 qiang1* = long-gun) = rifle. 機關槍 (*jil guan1 qiang1* = hinge-valve-gun) = machine-gun.

Executioner 槍斃 (*qiang1 bi4* = gun-die = shot dead) criminal. Lone Ranger 單槍匹馬 (*dan1 qiang1 pi1 ma3* = single-gun-one-horse = roams alone). 槍林彈雨 (*qiang1 lin2 dan4 yu3* = guns-forest-bullets-rain) = thick/heavy gun-fire.

Gunner 持槍 (*chi2 qiang1* = holds/wields-gun/rifle), 開槍 (*kai1 qiang1* = open-gun = opens fire), 槍殺 (*qiang1 sha1* = gun-kill = shoots down) victims. Many victims 身中多槍 (*shen1 zhong4 duo1 qiang1* = body-gets-hit-many-gun = got hit by many shots).

by Diana Yue