

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 England

英

Putonghua pronunciation: *ying1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ying1*

Meanings: First word in England's Chinese name

England's Chinese name is 英格蘭 (*ying1 ge2 lan2*). These three *zi* are chosen for their sounds, not their literal meaning “hero~square~orchid”. 英語 (*ying1 yu3* = English~language), 英里 (*ying1 li3* = English~mile) are used worldwide.

On island of 大不列顛 (*da4 bu4 lie4 dian1* = Great~“Britain”-transliterated) are England, 蘇格蘭 (*su1 ge2 lan2* = “Scotland”-transliterated), 威爾士 (*wei1 er3 shi4* = “Wales”-transliterated). These with 北愛爾蘭 (*bei3 ai4 er3 lan2* = Northern Ireland) form 聯合王國 (*lian2 h2 wang2 guo2* = join~combine~king~state = United Kingdom/UK), conventionally called 英國 (*ying1 guo2* = “Eng”~state).

UK is member of 歐盟 (*ou1 meng2* = “Eu”-transliterated~alliance = European Union) but not 歐羅區 (*ou1 luo2 qu1* = “Euro”-transliterated~region = Eurozone).