Character Builder 您好嗎? 什么

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 O.

This week: Words about memory

強 Putonghua pronunciation: qiang2 Cantonese pronunciation: keung4
Meaning: strong, powerful, forceful, tyrannical, strengthen, improve, better

強 (radical 弓 gong1, bow) means strong/powerful: 強烈 (qiang2 lie4 = strong-powerful) smell, 強勁 (qiang2 jing4 = strong-forceful) gale, 強盜 (qiang2 dao4 = strong-rob/robber) = bandit, 強姦 (qiang2 jian1 = forced-adultery) = rape. G7 are presumably 強國 (qiang2 guo2 = powerful-states).

Robin Hood 強強扶弱 (chu2 qiang2 fu2 ruo4 = hoe/eradicate-strong-support-weak = punishes oppressors to help oppressed). Orphan 自強不息 (zi4 qiang2 bu4 xin1 = self-strengthen-no-rest = keeps improving himself), becomes 強人 (qiang2 ren2 = strong/dominant-person = strong political/business figure).

Scholar 博聞強記 (bo2 wen2 qiang2 ji4 = broad-hear-strong-remember = has wide exposure, powerful memory). Pianist 強 調 (qiang2 diao4 = strong-tone = emphasizes) diligent practice, achieves 高強 (gao1 qiang2 = high-level-strong = great) fingering techniques.

by Diana Yue