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 stockmarket gambling

Putonghua pronunciation: du3
Cantonese pronunciation: do2
Meanings: bet, gameble, take chances, run risks

賭 = 賭博 (= 賭博 du3 bo2 = gamble-wrestle/bet) = gamble. 賭錢 (du3 qian2 = gamble-money) = play for money. 博奕 (bo2 yi4 = wrestle-chess) = play chess-game.

賭徒 (du3 tu2 = gambl-ers) play in 賭場 (du3 chang3 = gamble-field/enclosure = casinos), 股市 (gu3 shi4 = stock-market), 匯市 (hui4 shi4 = currency-market), study “孫子兵法” (Sun1 Zi3 bing1 fa3 = Sun-zi-soldier/war-method = Sun-zi’s The Art of War), 博奕論 (bo2 yi4 lun4 = wrestle-chess-discuss = game theory).

Gamblers 下錯注 (xia4 cuo4 zhu4 = down-wrong-stakes = place wrong stakes), 賭家通通殺 (zhuang1 jia1 tong1 sha1 = controlling-bank-home/side-through-kill = bank takes all).

Truly, 十賭九輸 (shi2 du3 jiu3 shu1 = among-ten-gamblers-nine-lose).

by Diana Yue