Character Builder 您好！

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 comradeship

Putonghua pronunciation: dao4
Cantonese pronunciation: do4
Meaning: way, road, path, method, approach, direction, truth, wisdom

道 (radical 走 is chuo4, walk) means 道路 (dao4 lu4 = path-way/road): 行人道 (xing2 ren2 dao4 = walk-people-road = pavement), 国道 (guo2 dao4 = national-highway), imperial 駐道 (chi2 dao4 = gallop-road = horse-chariot/carriage-road), train/planet's 軌道 (gui3 dao4 = track-way = railroad-tracks/orbit).

道家 (dao4 jia1 = Daoist-school = Daoism), 儒道 (ru2 dao4 = Confucian-ism), 佛道 (fo2 dao3 = Buddh-ism) are Chinese intellectual traditions. 老子 (Lao3 zi3, 5th century BC) wrote 道德经 (the Dao4 De2 Jing1 = way-virtue-classic), explained 道 (dao4, nature's way), 德 (de2, human virtue).

正道 (zheng4 dao4 = right-approach = righteous/decent)
people 講道理 (jiang3 dao4 li3 = talk-way-reason = treat others reasonably), 不霸道 (bu4 ba4 dao4 = no-bully's-way = don't bully others).

by Diana Yue