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 bank accounts

存
Putonghua pronunciation: cun2
Cantonese pronunciation: chuen4
Meaning: exist, remain, deposit, keep, hoard

存 (radical 子 zi3, son) means 存在 (cun2 zai4 = exist-is): 存留 (cun2 liu2 = exist-remain), 存量 (cun2 liang4 = remaining-quantity), 保存 (xing4 cun2 = fortunately-survive). 存在主義 (cun2 zai4 zu3 yi4 = exist-is-principal-meaning) = existentialism.

Museums 保存 (bao3 cun2 = preserve-keep) relics/artifacts.
Grains need 庫存 (ku4 cun2 = warehouse-storage). Computer’s 存儲器 (cun2 chu2 qi4 = keep-store-machine = memory/storage device) handles 存檔 (cun2 dang3 = keeping-files).
Bank customer 存錢 (cun2 qian2 = deposits-money). 存摺 (cun2 zhe2 = deposits-folder/booklet = bankbook) shows 結存 (jie2 cun2 = conclude-deposit = balances) of 定期存款 (ding4 qi1 cun2 kuan3 = fix-period-deposit-money = fixed deposits), 外幣 存款 (wai4 bi4 cun2 kuan3 = foreign-currency-deposit-money = FOREX deposits).