

Character Builder 您好嗎? 呀

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 World Expo

知

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji1*

Meanings: sense, awareness, know, knowledge

知 involves 知覺 (*zhi1 jue2* = know~aware/feel = senses), 記憶 (*ji4 yi1* = note~remember = memory), 經驗 (*jing1 yan4* = pass-check = experience), 理解 (*li3 jie3* = reason~unravel = understanding), 知識 (*zhi1 shi1* = know~recognize = knowledge). 無知 (*wu2 zhi1* = without-knowledge) = ignorant.

知道 (*zhi1 dao4* = know~way) = knowing someone/something's existence/occurrence. Responding to order/reminder, we say “知道了!” (*zhi1 dao4 le0* = know~way~already = “Yes/understand/agreed!”) 先知 (*xian1 zhi1* = pre-know) = prophet. 後知後覺 (*hou4 zhi1 hou4 jue2* = post-know~post-feel) = realizing/acting too late.

Good bosses 知人善任 (*zhi1 ren2 shan4 ren4* = understand~person~well~give-duty = understand employees' abilities, use them appropriately). 知足 (*zhi1 zu2* = know/feel~enough) means contented at present status/gains.

by Diana Yue