

Character Builder 您好學? 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 contracts

權

Putonghua pronunciation: *quán2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kuen4*

Meaning: power, authority, right, weigh, balance

權 (radical 木 *mu4*, wood/tree) means 權力 (*quán2 lì4* = authority-power) or 權利 (*quán2 lì4* = power/benefit = right): 人權 (*ren2 quán2* = human-rights), 侵權 (*qin1 quán2* = invade-right = tort), 權杖 (*quán2 zhàng4* = power-stick = mace), 奪權 (*duo2 quán2* = seize-power).

In 1997 Britain 權衡利害 (*quán2 heng2 li4 hai4* = weighed-balanced-benefits-harms = weighed pros and cons), returned Hong Kong's 主權 (*zhu3 quán2* = master-power = sovereignty) and 治權 (*zhi4 quán2* = legislative-power) to China.

Rental agreement defines partners' 權限 (*quán2 xiàn4* = powers-and-limitations). Owner has house's 所有權 (*suo3 you3 quán2* = which-has/posses-power = ownership), Tenant 有權 (*you3 quán2* = has-the-right to) inhabit house, 無權 (*wu2 quán2* = has-no-right-to) sell it.

by Diana Yue