

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 Bodhisattva Guanyin

財

Putonghua pronunciation: *cai2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *choi4*

Meanings: wealth, riches, money

財 has radical 貝 (*bei4*, seashell, ancient money). 財主 (*cai2 zhu3* = wealthy~master = rich man) owns 財產 (*cai2 can3* = wealth-and~assets). 財經雜誌 (*cai2 jing1 za2 zhi4* = finance~economy~miscellaneous~records/stories = financial magazines) report 財團 (*cai2 tuan2* = financial~groups') movements.

發財 (*fa1 cai2* = issue~wealth = getting rich) is everyone's wish. On day of 觀音開庫 (*guan1 yin1 kai1 ku4* = Guanyin~opens~vault/coffers), temple-goers pray for 財運 (*cai2 yun4* = wealth~luck = blessing/luck with money), place request-notes for 觀音菩薩 (*guan1 yin1 pu2 sa3* = Guanyin~Bodhisattva) to honour.

Gambler 求財 (*qiu2 cai2* = goes-after~money), wins then loses, sighs: “見財化水!” (*jian4 cai2 hua4 shui3* = see~wealth~transform/melt-into~water = “Money in sight just vanished!”)

by Diana Yue