

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 promotion

權

Putonghua pronunciation: *qüan2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kuen4*

Meanings: right, power, authority, to weigh

Character 權 = 木 (*mu4*, wood/scales-rod) + 艹 (草 *cao3*, grass/masses) + two 口 (*kou3*, mouth) + 佳 (*ji1*, good), suggests democratically-endorsed power. Rulers have 權力 (*qüan2 li4* = power~strength = power). Individuals have 權利 (*qüan2 li4* = powers~benefits = rights), 權益 (*qüan2 yi1* = powers~advantages = privileges), 人權 (*ren2 qüan2* = human~rights).

三權分立 (*san1 qüan2 fen1 li4* = three-powers~separately~stand) means mutual independence of executive power, legislative power, judicial power.

Nobility/clerics have 權威 (*qüan2 wei1* = power~might = authority). Commoners 無權無勇 (*wu2 qüan2 wu2 yong3* = no~power~no~bravery = are neither powerful nor strong/daring), can't fight authorities who 以權謀私 (*yi3 qüan2 mou2 si1* = use~power~plot~self = use official power to plot for private gains).

by Diana Yue