

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 centenary celebrations

樹

Putonghua pronunciation: *shu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sue6*

Meanings: tree, plant, establish

樹 (radical 木, *mu4* = wood) = trees/shrubs having 根 (*gen1*, roots), 枝幹 (*zhi1 gan4* = branches~trunk), 葉 (*ye4*, leaves). Noun 森林 (*sen1 lin2* = dark/shady~forest) consists of six characters 木. 松柏 (*song1 bai3* = pine-and~cypress) symbolize longevity. 榕樹 (*rong2 shu4* = banyan~trees), 影樹 (*ying3 shu4* = shadow~tree = flames of the forest) are common in Hong Kong. 植樹節 (*zhi2 shu4 jie2* = plant~trees~festival) = Arbor Day. 樹立 (*shu4 li4* = tree~stand) = establish. Genius makes 建樹 (*jian4 shu4* = build~tree = achievements). Invader 樹敵 (*shu4 di2* = erect~enemy = makes enemies). 前人種樹, 後人乘涼 (*qian2 ren2 zhong4 shu4, hou4 ren2 cheng2 liang2* = earlier~people~plant~trees, later~people~ride~coolness) means ancestors sow/work, we reap/enjoy.