

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 cooking shows

師

Putonghua pronunciation: *shi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *si1*

Meanings: teacher, master, example, specialist

師 = teacher/specialist: 巫師 (*wu1 shi1* = voodoo~master = shaman/sorcerer/wizard), 教師 (*jiao1 shi1* = teacher~ school-master), 律師 (*lü4 shi1* = law~master = lawyer). 法師 (*fa3 shi1* = doctrine~master) = priest/"reverend..." 軍師 (*jün1 shi1* = army~master = army's strategist) also means plan/courtship's advisor. 老師 (*lao3 shi1* = old/senior~teacher), 師傅 (*shi1 fu4* = teacher~master = skilled mechanic) are also honorifics for teacher/supervisor/mentor.

Aspiring pianist follows 大師 (*da4 shi1* = great~master = maestro), believing 名師出高徒 (*ming2 shi1 chu1 gao1 tu2* = famous/distinguished~teacher~produces~fine~students).

Apprentice 拜師 (*bai4 shi1* = honor~teacher = follows teacher/specialist) to become 廚師 (*chu2 shi1* = kitchen~master = cook/chef). Self-made cooks 無師自通 (*wu2 shi1 zi4 tong1* = without~teacher~self~understand = acquires knowledge/skill without learning from anyone).

by Diana Yue