

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 drinking



Putonghua pronunciation: *cha2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *cha4*

Meanings: tea

茶 (radical 木 = 草 *cao3*, grass) = tea: 喝茶 (*he1 cha2* = drink~tea), 熱茶 (*re4 cha2* = hot~tea), 品茶 (*pin3 cha2* = assess/sample~tea = taste/savor tea). 奉茶 (*feng4 cha2* = bring/serve~tea) to guest. 茶道 (*cha2 dao4* = tea~way/principle) = Japanese tea ceremony or tea-ism.

In 茶館 (*cha2 guan3* = tea-houses), 茶客 (*cha2 ke4* = tea-guests) enjoy 清茶 (*qing1 cha2* = plain~tea), 茶點 (*cha2 dian3* = tea~snacks), entertainment. Cantonese 飲茶 (*yin3 cha2* = Cantonese *yam2 cha4* = drink~tea) features tea, dim-sum. 飲涼茶 (*yin2 liang2 cha2* = drink~cool~tea) = take herbal medicinal tea to cool/cleanse body heat/system.

人走茶涼 (*ren2 zou3 cha2 liang2* = person~run/leave~tea~cool) means person/cadre no longer holding a position is immediately neglected.