

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 fishing

(radical 糸 = 絲 *si1*, silk/thread)

Putonghua pronunciation: *wang 3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mong 5*

Meanings: net

網 are knitted/linked structures: 蛛網 (*zhu1 wang3* = spider's-net), 漁網 (*yu2 wang3* = fishing-net), 網絡 (*wang3 luo4* = net-link) = 互聯網 (*hu4 lian2 wang3* = mutual-link-net) = network/net/web/Internet. 墮入情網 (*duo4 ru4 qing2 wang3* = fall-into-love-net) means falling in love.

拖網漁船 (*tuo1 wang3 yu2 chuan2* = drag-net-fishing-ship = trawlers) use 拖網 (*tuo1 wang3* = drag/trawl-nets), 撒網 (*sa1 wang3* = cast-net), 收網 (*shou1 wang3* = retrieve/pull-in-net).

漁翁撒網 (*yu2 weng1 sa1 wang3* = fishing-old-man-cast-net) means placing many bets to increase chances of winning. 一網打盡 (*yi1 wang3 da3 jin4* = one-net-hit/take-all) means capturing the whole gang. 漏網之魚 (*lou4 wang3 zhi1 yu2* = slip-through-net-'s-fish) is someone who escaped large-scale hunt-down.

by Diana Yue