

Character Builder 您好嗎? 呀

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 BRIC

磚

(radical 石 *shi 2* = stone)

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhuān 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *juēn 1*

Meanings: brick

磚窯 (*zhuān yāo 12* = brick-kilns/factories) manufacture 磚. 磚牆 (*zhuān qiáng 12* = brick-walls) are made of 磚頭 (*zhuān tóu 12* = brick-head = bricks). Archaeologists excavate 秦磚漢瓦 (*Qín zhuān Han wǎ 2143* = Qin-dynasty-bricks-Han-dynasty-roof-tiles = ancient architectural remains). 瓷磚 (*cí zhuān 21* = porcelain/ceramic-tiles) are used in kitchens/bathrooms.

Acronym “BRIC” and “brick” 同音 (*tóng yīn 21* = same-sound = are homonyms), thus “BRIC” is translated complimentarily as “金磚四國” (*jīn zhuān sì guó 1142* = gold-brick-four-states).

大國崛起 (*dà guó jué qǐ 4223* = big-state-rise-up = rise of big state) requires 現代化 (*xiàn dài huà 444* = now-generation-transform = modernization), 工業化 (*gōng yè huà 144* = industry-enterprise-transform = industrialization).