

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 Qing Dynasty



Putonghua pronunciation: *qi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ke4*

Meanings: ride, mount, rider

騎 (radical馬 *ma3*, horse) means 騎馬 (*qi2 ma3* = ride-horse), 騎車 (*qi2 che1* = ride/steer-bicycle/motorbike). 騎兵 (*qi2 bing1* = ride-soldier = cavalry) practice 騎術 (*qi2 shu4* = horse-riding-technic = horsemanship). 騎士 (*qi2 shi4* = ride-soldier/scholar) = rider/knight/chevalier. Cantonese “騎樓” (*qi2 lou2* = Cantonese “*ke4 lau4*” = horse-riding-loft) means verandah.

Mongolians, Manchurians are 遊牧民族 (*you2 mu4 min2 zu2* = roam-herd-people-tribe = nomadic peoples). To fight better, Han-Chinese imitated 胡服騎射 (*Hu2 fu2 qi2 she4* = north-western-tribes-dress-horsemanship-archery = nomadic dress, horseback-archery skills).

Mongolian 鐵騎 (*tie3 qi2* = iron-rider = fierce horseman) conquered Song Dynasty. Qing Dynasty 馬上得天下 (*ma3 shang4 de2 tian1 xia4* = horseback-on-obtain-heaven-under = conquered world, won throne by army conquest).