

Character Builder

您好學？

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 dress codes

服

Putonghua pronunciation: *fu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fuk3*

Meaning: dress, clothes, attire, ingest, respect, obey

服 (radical 月 *yue4*, moon) means 服用 (*fu2 yong4* = ingest-use = ingest/eat), 服從 (*fu2 cong2* = respect-obey), 衣服 (*yi1 fu2* = upper-garment-attire) = 服裝 (*fu2 zhuang1* = clothes-furnish/decorate) = dress/clothes/attire.

裁縫 (*cai2 feng2* = cut-fabric-sew = tailor) makes 外套 (*wai4 tao4* = outer-put-on = coat/jacket), 襯衣 (*qin4 yi1* = match-coat = shirt/blouse), 裙子 (*qun2 zi0* = skirt-diminutive = skirt), 褲子 (*ku4 zi0* = trousers/slacks-diminutive = trousers/slacks), 禮服 (*li3 fu2* = ceremonial/formal-dress), 制服 (*zhi4 fu2* = establishment-dress = uniform), 軍服 (*jün1 fu2* = military-attire).

洋服 (*yang2 fu2* = ocean/foreign-clothes) means western-style clothes/dresses/suits. Mourners wear 喪服 (*sang1 fu2* = funeral-attire). Models sport 華衣美服 (*hua2 yi1 mei3 fu2* = glamorous-upper-garment-beautiful-clothes) = glamorous/expensive clothes.

by Diana Yue