

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 royal weddings

嫁

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga3*

Meanings: marry husband, transfer

Many Chinese marriage terms have radical 女 (*nu3*, woman). 嫁 (女 + 家 *jia3*, home) means woman marries man. 婚姻 (*hun1 yin1* = marry~relation) = marriage. 結婚 (*jie2 hun1* = tie~marriage) = tie the knot. 嫁娶 (*jia4 qu3* = marry-man~marry-woman) = marriage/wedding event/activities.

Lovers 談婚論嫁 (*tan2 hun1 lun4 jia4* = talk~marriage~discuss~marry-man = consider/plan marriage). Kate 嫁人 (*jia4 ren2* = marry~person = gets married), prepares 嫁妝 (*jia4 zhuang1* = marriage~adornments/dowry). William 娶妻 (*qu3 qi1* = marries/takes~wife). Spinster 嫁不出 (*jia4 bu4 chu1* = marry~no~away = can't find husband).

嫁 also means relay/transfer. Criminal 嫁禍 (*jia4 huo4* = marry-man~disaster = passes on guilt) to scapegoat. Investment bank 轉嫁 (*zhuan3 jia4* = turn/relay~marry-man = dumps) losses on customers.

by Diana Yue