

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 empires



Putonghua pronunciation: *jun1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gwan1*

Meanings: army, military

國防 (*guo2 fang2* = state/national-defence) requires 武力 (*wu3 li4* = military-strength), 軍隊 (*jun1 dui4* = army/troops-team = army).

軍國主義 (*jun1 guo2 zhu3 yi4* = army-state-main-meaning = militarism) fuelled WWII. In China, 抗戰軍興 (*kang4 zhan4 jun1 xing1* = resist-war-army-rise) = War of Resistance against Japan boosted expansion of army. Many young men 從軍 (*cong2 jun1* = followed/joined-army). Chinese 軍方 (*jun1 fang1* = army-side = military commanders) launched 軍事行動 (*jun1 shi4 xing2 dong4* = army-actions-walk-move = military actions) against invading 日軍 (*Ri4 jun1* = “Jap”an-transliterated-troops).

In Europe, 盟軍 (*meng2 jun1* = allied-forces) fought 德軍 (*De2 jun1* = “Deut”sch-transliterated-troops) until they 潰不成軍 (*kui4 bu1 cheng2 jun1* = break-no-form-army = were crushed completely).

by Diana Yue