

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 rice-planting

種

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jung3*

Meanings: plant

Verb 種 = planting 種子 (*zhong3 zi0* = seed-diminutive = seeds): 種稻 (*zhong4 dao4* = plant-grain/rice-crops), 種菜 (*zhong4 cai4* = plant-vegetables), 種花 (*zhong4 hua1* = plant/cultivate flowers). 種水稻 (*zhong4 shui3 dao4* = cultivating~wet-rice-crops) is labor-intensive: 翻土 (*fan1 tu3* = turn/till-soil), 育苗 (*yu4 miao2* = breed/nurture~young-shoots), 插秧 (*cha1 yang1* = insert~young-shoots = plant young shoots in field), 除草除蟲 (*chu2 cao3 chu2 chong2* = eliminate~weeds-eliminate~ worms/pests), 施肥 (*shi1 fei2* = apply~fertilizers), 灌排水 (*guan4 pai2 shui3* = pour~drain~water = flood, drain field).

Intensive farming requires 深耕密植 (*shen1 geng1 mi4 zhi2* = deep~ploughing/tilling~close~planting). 雜交水稻 (*za2 jiao1 shui3 dao4* = mixed-crossbreed~wet~rice = hybrid rice) greatly increased 收成 (*shou1 cheng2* = collect~result/success = harvest).

by Diana Yue