

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 manipulating stockmarkets

吞

Putonghua pronunciation: *tun1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tan1*

Meanings: swallow

吞 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) = swallow. 吞吞吐吐 (*tun1 tun1 tu4 tu4* = swallow~swallow~spit~spit) describes stammering person. 吞吐量 (*tun1 tu4 liang4* = swallow~spit~volume) = port/network's cargo/throughput volume. 吞沒 (*tun1 mo4* = swallows~ covers/vanishes = buries) sunken boat.

忍雲吐霧 (*tun1 yü2 tu4 wu4* = swallow~cloud~spit~fog) describes heavy-smoker smoking. 生吞活剝 (*sheng1 tun1 huo2 bo1* = alive~swallow~living~peel) describes swallowing of theories without comprehension.

Lion 吞噬 (*ten1 shi4* = swallows~bites/eats) prey. Big firm 吞併 (*tun1 bing4* = swallows~amalgamates = takes over) small firm in M&A. Speculators 鯨吞 (*jing1 tun1* = whale~swallow = makes gigantic gains on) losers' 股票 (*gu3 piao4* = stocks~tickets/papers = securities), 外匯 (*wai4 hui4* = foreign-transfer = foreign currencies) as market collapses.

by Diana Yue