

# 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:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> 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 autumn

Putonghua pronunciation: *shou1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sau1*

Meanings: collect, accept, withdraw

收 = bring in. Farmers 收割 (*shou1 ge1* = collect-cut = cut/reap) harvest. 收穫 (*shou1 huo4* = collect-harvest) = harvest/gain: 豐收 (*feng1 shou1* = abundant-harvest), 失收 (*shi1 shou1* = failed/poor-harvest).

IRS 收稅 (*shou1 shui4* = collects~taxes), landlord 收租 (*shou1 zu1* = collects~rent). Childless couple 收養 (*shou1 yang3* = take-in-feed/raise = adopt) orphan. Connoisseurs 收藏 (*shou1 cang2* = take-in~store = collects) antiques. Defeated army, fighting back, 收復失地 (*shou1 fu4 shi1 di4* = take-back-resume~lost-land = reclaims/re-occupies lost territory). Apologizing person 收回 (*shou1 hui2* = takes-back = retracts) words.

收斂 (*shou1 lian3* = drawn-in~contract) describes person's modest/withdrawn style. Economic policy's 一放一收 (*yi1 fang4 yi1 shou1* = one-release-one-withdraw) means alternately giving economy free reign and tight control.