

# 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 looking pretty

膚

Putonghua pronunciation: *fu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *foo1*

Meanings: skin

膚 = 皮膚 (*pi2 fu1* = leather/skin~skin). Genes/nutrition affect 膚色 (*fu1 se1* = skin~color). 皮毛 (*pi2 mao2* = skin~hair/down/fur = superficial) knowledge is 膚淺 (*fu1 qian3* = skin~shallow = without depth).

Women hate 皺紋 (*zou4 wen2* = wrinkle~line = wrinkles), 雀斑 (*que4 ban1* = bird-stripe/spot = freckles), use 緊膚水 (*jin3 fu1 shui3* = tighten~skin~water/lotion), 面膜 (*mian4 mo2* = face~membrane = face masks), 面霜 (*mian4 shuang1* = face~frost = face-cream) for 護膚 (*hu4 fu1* = protect~skin = skin-care). 臉如凝脂 (*lian3 ru2 ning2 zhi1* = face~resembles~coagulated~lard/cream) describes lovely woman's creamy smooth face.

When looking 憔悴 (*qiao2 cui4* = sickly~unwell), put on 胭脂 (*yan1 zhi1* = rouge), 口紅 (*kou3 hong2* = mouth~red = lipstick)!