

# 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 political parties



Putonghua pronunciation: *dang3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *dong2*

Meanings: party, faction, gang, clique

黨 = 黨派 (*dang3 pai4* = party~faction). Comrades 結黨 (*jie2 dang3* = tie/form~party), absorb 黨員 (*dang3 yuan2* = party~members). 保皇黨 (*bao3 huang2 dang3* = protect-king/emperor~party = loyalists) denounce 叛黨 (*pan4 dang3* = rebel~ gang = rebels).

In China, 國民黨 (*guo2 min2 dang3* = state~people~party = Nationalist Party) was 執政黨 (*zhi2 zheng4 dang3* = hold~rule~party = ruling party), but 黨派林立 (*dang3 pai4 lin2 li4* = party~faction~forest~stand = had many rivaling factions), launched 清黨 (*qing1 dang3* = clean-up~party = party purge). 共產黨 (*gong4 chan2 dang3* = common/share~property~party = Communist Party) took over in 1949.

黑手黨 (*hei1 shou3 dang3* = black~hand~party) means the Mafia. 黃牛黨 (*huang2 niu2 dang3* = yellow~ox~party) means touting gang.