

# 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 pipe organs



Putonghua pronunciation: *zhen4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jan3*

Meanings: shake, vibrate, shock, stun

震 (radical 雨 *yü3*, rain) is associated with 打雷 (*da3 lei2* = striking~thunder = thunderbolts), 地震 (*di4 zhen4* = earth~quakes). Aerial bombings 震破 (*zhen4 po4* = shake~break = crashing) windows aim at 震懾 (*zhen4 she4* = stun~awe/intimidate = frightening) city's inhabitants.

腦震蕩 (*nao3 zhen4 dang4* = brain~shock~sway) = concussion. Parkinson patient's hands 震顫 (*zhen zhan4* = shake~tremble). Mass shootings 震驚 (*zhen4 jing1* = shock~fear = stun) the world, make authorities 震怒 (*zhen4 nu4* = shocked~angry = outraged).

Organ's fortissimo sound 震耳欲聾 (*zhen4 er3 yü4 long2* = shake~ears~would~deaf = is deafening). Passion music 大合唱 (*da4 he2 chang4* = big~together~sing = grand~chorus) 震撼人心 (*zhen4 han4 ren2 xin1* = stun~shake~people's~hearts = stirs/stuns audience).