

# 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 more animal stories

豬

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jue1*

Meanings: swine, hog, pig

豬 (radical 豕 *shi3* = pig) is very early domesticated. In character 家 (*jia1*, home), pig lives under man's 宀 (roof). Chinese often say 肉 (*rou4*, meat) for 豬肉 (*zhu1 rou4* = pig~meat = pork). 豬油 (*zhu1 you2* = pig~oil) = lard. 火腿 (*huo3 tui3* = fire~leg) = ham.

“蠢豬!” (*chun3 zhu1* = stupid~pig) is humiliating/facetious term. 豬狗不如 (*zhu1 gou3 bu4 ru2* = pig~dog~not~equal = worse than pigs and dogs) describes morally despicable people or mal-treatment of slaves.

人怕出名豬怕壯 (*ren2 pa4 chu1 ming2 zhu1 pa4 zhuang4* = human~fear~emerge~fame~pig~fear~strong) means fame invites attack, just as meaty pig invites slaughter. Novel Animal Farm's Chinese translation is “肥豬王” (*fei2 zhu1 wang2* = fat~pig~king).

by Diana Yue