

# 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 Bodhisattva Guanyin



Putonghua pronunciation: *song1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sung3*

Meanings: bring, deliver, present, give, present, dispatch

送 (radical 辶 = 走 *zou3*, run/away) means bring/dispatch. Waiter 送上 (*song4 shang4* = deliver~up = brings) coffee. Postman 送信 (*song4 xin4* = delivers~letters). DHL parcel 送到 (*song4 dao4* = deliver~arrive = has arrived). 送客 (*song4 ke4* = send-off~ guest) = see guest out/off. 送別 (*song3 bie2* = send~depart) = bid farewell.

School-bus 接送 (*jie2 song4* = accept~send = takes) children to and from school. Oil-pipes 輸送 (*shu1 song4* = send-out-deliver = transport) petroleum. 送瘟神 (*song4 wen1 shen2* = send-off~epidemic~god) means exorcising/sending away epidemic demon or much-hated person.

送禮 (*song4 li3* = deliver~rite/present) = offering gifts/bribes. Woman wishing to get pregnant with male-child worships 送子觀音 (*song4 zi3 guan1 yin1* = bring~son~Guanyin = Bodhisattva Guanyin, bestower of sons).

by Diana Yue