

# Character Builder 您好學？

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 One Belt One Road

Putonghua pronunciation: *dai4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *daai3*

Meaning: lead, take, bring, carry, line, belt

Verb 帶 (radical 巾 *jin1*, scarf/kerchief) means 帶領 (*dai4 ling3* = lead-collar = lead), 帶有 (*dai4 you3* = contain~has). 帶笑 (*dai4 xiao4* = carry~smile) = smilingly. 帶孩子 (*dai4 hai2 zi0* = carry~child~diminutive) = child-care. 帶菌者 (*dai4 jun1 zhe3* = carry~germ~person) = germ-carrier.

Noun 帶 means line/belt: 腰帶 (*yao1 dai4* = waist~belt), 鞋帶 (*xie2 dai4* = shoe~lace), 熱帶 (*ri4 dai4* = hot/tropical~belt). 裙帶 (*qun2 dai4*) = skirt-rim/edge means nepotism.

China launches 一帶一路 (*yi1 dai4 yi1 lu4* = One~Belt~One~Road) strategy, 帶頭 (*dai4 tou2* = lead~head = takes the lead) to develop 中亞地帶 (*zhong1 ya3 di4 dai4* = middle~"A"~sia~land~belt = Central Asian regions), 帶動 (*dai4 dong4* = lead~move = initiates/generates) economic development.