

# 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 flooding

注

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jue3*

Meanings: pour, inject

注 (radical 灬 = 水 *shui3*, water) means squirting/streaming of liquid. Maid 注水 (*zhu4 shui3* = pours~water) into bottle.

Patient receives 注射 (*zhu4 she4* = pour~shoot = injection).

Investors 注入資金 (*zhu4 ru4 zi1 jin1* = pour~in~capital~gold = put in money), 注重 (*zhu4 zhong4* = pour~important = attach importance to) company's performance.

Economists 注意 (*zhu4 yi4* = pour/concentrate~idea = pay notice/attention to) economic slow-down, 關注 (*guan1 zhu4* = care~concentrate = are concerned about/watch) unemployment.

血流如注 (*xue3 liu2 ru2 zhu4* = blood~flow~resemble~pour) describes gushing wound. After 大雨如注 (*da4 yu3 ru2 zhu4* = big~rain~resemble~pour = heavy downpour), flood water 流注 (*liu2 zhu4* = flow~pour) into aqueducts, 灌注 (*guan4 zhu4* = fill~pour = irrigate) farmland.

by Diana Yue