

# Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 the Tibetan people

藏

Putonghua pronunciation: *cang2, zang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jong6*

Meaning: hide, collection, Tibet, Tibetan

藏 (radical 艹 = 草 *cao3*, grass) means 收藏 (*shou1 cang2* = gather-collect/store), 寶藏 (*bao3 zang4* = treasures-collection). 西藏 (*Xi1 Zang4* = Tibet), called 世界屋脊 (*shi4 jie4 wu1 ji3* = world-border-house-back = roof of the world), was ancient country 吐蕃 (*Tu4 Bo1* = Tibet - transliterated). In 藏語 (*Zang4 yü3* = Tibetan-language), 藏 means sacred/pure. 藏族 (*Zang4 zu2* = Tibetan-race), 藏羚羊 (*Zang4 ling2 yang2* = Tibetan-antelopes) inhabit 青藏高原 (*Qing1 Zang4 gao1 yüan2* = Qinghai-Tibet Plateau). 青藏鐵路 (*Qing1 Zang4 tie3 lu4* = Qinghai-Tibet-Railway) 入藏 (*ru4 Zang4* = enters-Tibet), ends at 拉薩 (*la1 sa4* = Lhasa - transliterated), capital of 西藏自治區 (*Xi1 Zang4 zi4 zhi4 qü1* = Xizang/Tibet Autonomous Region, established 1959).

by Diana Yue