

# 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 One Belt One Road

路

Putonghua pronunciation: *lu4*  
Cantonese pronunciation: *lo6*  
Meaning: road, path, way

路 (radical 足 *zu2*, foot) means 道路 (*dao4 lu4* = way/path-road), 路線 (*lu4 xian4* = way/route-line/approach).

Engineers 築路 (*zhu4 lu4* = build-roads): 公路 (*gong1 lu4* = public-road/highway), 鐵路 (*tie3 lu4* = iron-road = railway).

Historic 絲綢之路 (*si1 chou2 zhi1 lu4* = silk-satin-'s-road = 絲路 *si1 lu4* = silk-road/route) linked China with 中西亞 (*zhong1 xi1 ya3* = Central-and-Western-Asia). 海上絲路 (*hai3 shang4 si1 lu4* = sea-on/based-silk-road = Maritime Silk Route) linked China with 東南亞 (*dong1 nan2 ya3* = east-south/Southeast-Asia), India, Arabia.

China seeks 同路人 (*tong2 lu4 ren2* = same-road-person = like-minded people/partners) in developing 21st-century 一帶一路 (*yi1 dai4 yi1 lu4* = One-Belt-One-Road = Belt and Road Initiative, abbr. OBOR).