

# 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

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji6*

Meanings: curb, manage, control, rule

治 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) originally means治水 (*zhi4 shui3* = controlling~water/floods). 辦水利 (*ban4 shui3 li4* = do~water~benefit) means constructing irrigation projects.

During 雨災 (*yu3 zai1* = rain~disaster = flooding caused by rain), 堤壩 (*di1 ba4* = dikes/levees~dams) hold water back, 水道 (*shui3 dao4* = water~channels) 疏導 (*shu1 dao3* = thin/spread~direct = diverge/re~direct) flood water into 河 (*he2*, rivers), 湖 (*hu2*, lakes), 池 (*chi2*, ponds), 水庫 (*shui3 ku4* = water~store = reservoirs).

治 also means manage/control/rule. 治安 (*zhi4 an1* = control~security/peace) = law and order. President 治國 (*zhi4 guo2* = rules~country). Housewife 治家 (*zhi4 jia1* = manages~household). Doctor 治病 (*zhi4 bing4* = treats/cures~illnesses). Victim of fatal accident 不治 (*bu4 zhi4* = no~cure = dies).

by Diana Yue