

# 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 regime change

政

Putonghua pronunciation: *zheng4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jing3*

Meanings: politics, rule, regime administration

政 = 政治 (*zheng4 zhi4* = politics~rule/regime). 政府 (*zheng4 fu3* = rule~house = government) implements 政策 (*zheng4 ce4* = political~plan/strategy = policies). Hongkong is 特別行政區 (*te4 bie2 xing2 zheng4 qu1* = different~other~practice~administration~region = special administrative region).

從政 (*cong2 zheng4* = follow~politics) = pursue political career, join 政黨 (*zheng4 dang3* = political~party). In Chinese, 政客 (*zheng4 ke4* = political~activist) implies playing dirty politics, while 政治家 (*zheng4 zhi4 jia1* = politics~rule~master = politician) has vision/ideals.

Protesters criticize 政權 (*zheng4 quan2* = rule~power/authority = regime), shout: “苛政猛於虎!” (*he1 zheng4 meng3 yu1 hu3* = harsh~rule~fierce~than~tiger = “The rulers/laws are oppressive, tyrannical!”), demand 還政於民 (*huan2 zheng4 yu1 min2* = return~rulership~to~the~people).