

# 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 Jesus' crucifixion

架

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga3*

Meanings: rack, shelf, construct, raise, prop up

Verb 架 (加 *jia1*, add + 木 *mu4*, wood) means make/build structure: 架橋 (*jia4 qiao2* = build~bridge), 疊床架屋 (*die2 chuang2 jia4 wu1* = pile~beds~stack~rooms = having too many/redundant parts in plan/design). Generals 架空 (*jia4 kong1* = prop-up~void = suspends) ruler's power.

Noun 架 structure/frame: 書架 (*shu1 jia4* = book~shelf), 衣架 (*yi1 jia4* = clothes~rack). CEO manages firm's 架構 (*jia4 gou4* = rack~construction = structure/establishment). Snob flaunts 架子 (*jia4 zi0* = propped-up~diminutive = haughty airs).

Chinese term 十字架 (*shi2 zi4 jia4* = ten~character~rack = rack shaped like the Chinese character "十") means the cross. Jesus received ancient Romans' 死刑 (*si3 xing2* = death~penalty: 釘十字架 (*ding1 shi2 zi4 jia4* = nailing-on-the~cross = crucify/crucifixion).

by Diana Yue