

# 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 manipulating stockmarkets

游

Putonghua pronunciation: *you2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yau4*

Meanings: move, drift, float, swim

游 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means 游泳 (*you2 yong3* = move~swim = swim). 游's near-equivalent 遊 (*you2*, radical 辶 = 舟 *zhou1*, boat) means move/travel.

Wanderers 遊蕩 (*you2 dang4* = move~roam = loiter/drift aimlessly). 游手好閒 (*you2 shou3 hao4 xian2* = swim~hand/arm~love~leisure) describes idler swaying his arms. Lobbyist 游說 (*you2 shui4* = go-around~peddle-idea = invites/persuades) 游離份子 (*you2 li2 fen4 zi0* = swim~away~part-diminutive = detached/estranged members) to re-join camp.

Fish 游動 (*you2 dong4* = swim~move), eat 浮游生物 (*fu2 you2 sheng1 wu4* = float~drift~living~things = plankton). 大鱷 (*da4 e4* = big~croc = powerful-ruthless speculators) target 游資 (*you3 zi1* = swim/drift~capital = floating capital = 熱錢 *re4 qian2* = hot~money = short-term speculative capital).

by Diana Yue