

# 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 quarrelling



Putonghua pronunciation: *chao3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chaau2*

Meanings: noisy, noise, clamour, quarrel, row, squabble, bickering

吵 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) describes 嘈吵 (*cao2 chao3* = clamorous/irritating-noisy) sounds. Music/traffic 太吵 (*tai4 chao3* = is too-noisy/loud!) Kids 吵嚷 (*chao3 rang4* = yell-shout noisily). Dad complains: 吵死了 (*chao3 si3 le0* = noisy-to-death = this noise is killing me!)

吵架 (*chao3 jia4* = quarrel-fight) = row. Couple 鬥嘴 (*dou4 zui3* = compete/fight-mouths = engage in war of words), 爭吵 (*zheng1 chao3* = dispute/argue-quarrel). Mother-in-law 勸架 (*qian4 jia4* = dissuade-quarrel/fight = tries pacifying quarrel/fight): 別吵嘴了! (*bie2 chao3 zui3 le0* = don't-quarrel-mouth-ed = Stop squabbling!)

Congress 吵吵鬧鬧 (*chao3 chao3 nao4 nao4* = quarrel-quarrel-noise-noise = keep quarrelling/bickering), 越吵越兇 (*yue4 chao3 yue4 xiong1* = more-quarrel-more-fierce = quarrel gets fiercer and fiercer).

by Diana Yue