

# 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 fall colors

遍

Putonghua pronunciation: *bian4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *pin3*

Meaning: everywhere, widespread, common, general, round

遍 (radical 辶 *chuo4*, walk) means everywhere/common. Goldfish 遍體金黃 (*bian4 ti3 jin1 huang2* = whole-body-is-golden-yellow). Made-in-China products 遍佈 (*bian4 bu4* = are-wide-spread in) US, 普遍 (*pu3 bian4* = generally-commonly) low-priced.

一兩遍 (*yi1 liang3 bian4* = one-two-rounds/times) = once or twice. Pianist practices piece 無數遍 (*wu2 shu4 bian4* = no-number/count-times = endless times). Reporter 走遍天下 (*zou3 bian4 tian1 xia4* = run-everywhere-sky-under = travels everywhere under the sun), 遍訪名人 (*bian4 fang3 ming2 ren2* = everywhere-visit-famous-people = interviewed many VIPs).

Park 遍植楓樹 (*bian4 zhi2 feng1 shu4* = is everywhere-planted-with-maple-trees). In autumn 遍山紅葉 (*bian4 shan1 hong2 ye4* = everywhere-on-the-hills-are-red-leaves), but soon 落葉遍地 (*luo4 ye4 bian4 di4* = fallen-leaves-are-all-over-the-ground).

by Diana Yue