

# 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

攻

Putonghua pronunciation: *gong1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gung1*

Meanings: attack, offensive

攻 = 進攻 (*jin4 gong1* = advance/forward-attack) = attack.  
Army 攻擊 (*gong1 ji1* = attacks~hits/storms) enemy, 攻佔 (*gong1 zhan4* = attacks~occupies) territories/cities.

投資者 (*tou2 zi4 zhe3* = throw-in~capital~person = investors)  
watch 金融市場 (*jin1 rong2 shi4 chang3* = gold~merge~market-place = financial market). Commentators advise 攻守策略 (*gong1 shou3 ce4 lue4* = attack~defend~strategy~plan = how/when to buy/sell/act/wait).

投機者 (*tou2 ji1 zhe3* = throw/head-for~chance~person = speculators) launch 攻勢 (*gong1 shi4* = attack~force = offensive), 買空 (*mai3 kong1* = buy~empty = long futures), 賣空 (*mai4 kong1* = sell~empty = short futures). 恆生指數 (*Heng2 Sheng1 zhi3 shu4* = Hang~Seng~finger~number = Hang Seng Index) rises and falls, 失守 (*shi1 shou3* = lose~defense = drops below) 15,000.