

# 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 electricity

照

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jiu3*

Meaning: shine, bright

照 (radical 灬 = 火 *huo3*, fire) suggests firelight/sunlight's brightness/reflection. 照耀 (*zhao4 yao4* = shine-bright) = shine. 照射 (*zhao4 she4* = shine-shoot) = radiate/cast light. 日照時段 (*ri4 zhao4 shi2 duan4* = sun-shine-time-section) = daylight period/duration.

照鏡 (*zhao4 jing4* = shine/reflect-mirror) = look at oneself in the mirror. 拍照 (*pai4 zhao4* = pat-reflect-image) = take photograph. 照片 (*zhao4 pian4* = shine/reflect-piece) = photo. X-ray 照出 (*zhao4 chu1* = reflect-image-out = shows) ulcer.

Sun 普照萬物 (*pu3 zhao4 wan4 wu4* = all-shine-ten-thousand-things = shines on all the world). 夕陽斜照 (*xi2 yang2 xie2 zhao4* = evening-sun's-slanting-rays) generates 夕照 (*xi2 zhao4* = evening-glow). 電燈 (*dian4 deng1* = electric-lamps) provide 照明 (*zhao4 ming2* = shine-bright = lighting).

by Diana Yue