

# 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 libraries

Putonghua pronunciation: *shu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sue1*

Meanings: writing script, calligraphy, document, book, letter

Libraries house 書籍 (*shu1 jì2* = book~register = books), 期刊 (*qī1 kān4* = period~publish = periodicals), 影音材料 (*yīng3 yīn1 cái2 liào4* = shadow~sound~wood~material = audio-visual materials), purchase 新書 (*xīn1 shu1* = new~books).

藏書家 (*cháng2 shu1 jiā1* = hoard~book~master = book collectors) study 舊書 (*jiù4 shu1* = old~books), 古書 (*gǔ3 shu1* = ancient~books), 出版者 (*chū1 bǎn2 zhě3* = out~printing~board~person = publishers), 版本 (*bǎn2 běn3* = printing~board~base = editions), collect 善本 (*shàn2 běn3* = good~base = good editions), 孤本 (*gū1 běn3* = orphan~base = only/rare copies), 禁書 (*jìn4 shu1* = banned~books).

2,200 years ago the Chinese Emperor 焚書坑儒 (*fēn2 shu1 kēng1 rú2* = burn~book~bury~alive~Confucianist = ordered banning/destruction of Confucian scholars/writings), causing controversy.

by Diana Yue