

# 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 talents

智

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji 3*

Meanings: intelligence, knowledge, intellectual brilliance, wisdom

智 = intellectually smart: 智商 (*zhi shang 41* = intelligence-quotient = IQ), chess-player's 智力 (*zhi li 44* = thinking-strength/capacity), computers' 人工智能 (*ren gong zhi neng 2142* = human-work-intelligence-ability = artificial intelligence).

智者 (*zhi zhe 43* = wise-person = sages) have 智慧 (*zhi hui 44* = fine-knowledge-moral-discernment = intellectual, moral wisdom). Politicians need 才智 (*cai zhi 24* = talent-wisdom), 智庫 (*zhi ku 44* = knowledge/wisdom-storehouse = think tanks).

Facing pressure/emergencies, 智多星 (*zhi duo xing 411* = intelligence-many-star = brilliant strategists) show 急智 (*ji zhi 24* = urgent-cleverness = quick/clever idea/response). David 智取 (*zhi qu 43* = clever-take = used strategy to capture/defeat) Goliath, avoided 力敵 (*li di 42* = strength-oppose/resist = competing with him in muscle-strength).