

# 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 progress

Putonghua pronunciation: *yue4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yeuk6*

Meaning: leap, jump, hop

躍 (radical 足 *zu2*, foot) means 跳躍 (*tiao4 yue4* = jump-leap/hop). Gazelle 飛躍 (*fei1 yue4* = fly-leap = leaps/runs like flying). Fugitive 躍下 (*yue4 xia4* = jumps-down/off) cliff. 躍躍欲試 (*yue4 yue4 yu4 shi4* = leap-leap-desire-try) describes person eager/itching to try something.

Scholar 鯉躍龍門 (*li3 yue4 long2 men2* = carp-jump-over-dragon-gate = comes first in national exam), family 歡躍 (*huan1 yue4* = joyfully-leap-up). Novel's characters 躍然紙上 (*yue4 ran2 zhi3 shang4* = leap-indeed-paper-surface = are very vivid).

In 1958 PRC launched 大躍進 (*da4 yue4 jin4* = Big-Leap-Forward) movement, unrealistic, failed attempt to increase agricultural and industrial production many times. Now country's GDP 躍居首位 (*yue4 ju1 shou3 wei4* = leap-occupy-first-position = becomes first) in Asia.

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