

# 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

館

(radical 食 shi2 = eat)

Putonghua pronunciation: *guan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goon2*

Meanings: house, guesthouse, lodge, building, eatery

館 = special purpose building: 博物館 (*bo2 wu4 guan3* = broad-things~building = museum), 美術館 (*mei3 shu1 guan3* = beauty-method~building = art gallery), 圖書館 (*tu2 shu1 guan3* = picture-book~building = library), 大使館 (*da4 shi4 guan2* = big-envoy~building = ambassador's building = embassy).

館長 manages 館藏 (*guan3 chang2* = building~hoard = museum/gallery/library's collections), plans 展覽 (*zhan2 lan3* = show~look = exhibitions). Library's 圖書管理員 (*tu2 shu1 guan2 li3 yuan2* = picture~book~control~manage~person = librarians) handle 借書 (*jie4 shu1* = lending/borrowing-of~books), 還書 (*huan2 shu1* = returning-of~books), 編目 (*bian1 mu4* = edit/collate~item = cataloguing).

飯館 (*fan4 guan3* = cooked-rice-house) = eatery/restaurant. 上館子 (*shang4 guan3 zi0* = mount-restaurant-diminutive = eating out) is nice, if affordable.

by Diana Yue