

# 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 lovers

棄

Putonghua pronunciation: *qi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hei3*

Meanings: leave, throw out, give up, abandon

棄 = abandon thing/person. Weakling 放棄 (*fang4 qi4* = release~forfeit = gives up) privileges/benefits. Litterbug 棄置 (*qi4 zhi4* = leaves~puts) 棄物 (*qi4 wu4* = thrown-out~things = unwanted items) anywhere. Dissident protests by 投棄權票 (*tou2 qi4 quan2 piao4* = cast~give-up~right~vote = using vote abstention).

Unmarried mother 遺棄 (*yi2 qi4* = leave~abandon = abandons) baby. Heartless husband 拋妻棄子 (*pao1 qi1 qi4 zi3* = throw~wife~abandon~son = abandons family). 時代的棄兒 (*shi2 dai4 de0 qi4 er2* = time~generation~'s~abandoned~child) describes dropouts discarded by changing times.

Failure-stricken husband appreciates wife's 不離不棄 (*bu4 li2 bu4 qi4* = won't~leave~won't~abandon = remaining faithful and devoted). Pragmatist 人棄我取 (*ren2 qi4 wo3 qu3* = person/other~abandon~I~take = take what others don't want).

by Diana Yue