

# 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 disabled people



Putonghua pronunciation: *long2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lung4*

Meanings: deaf

殘 (*can2*) means withered/incomplete/disabled: 殘花 (*can2 hua1* = withered flower), 殘月 (*can2 yue4* = waning-moon), 殘廢 (*can2 fei4* = mangled/maimed-invalidated = disabled), 自殘 (*zi4 can2* = self-maim = disfigure/maim oneself).

耳科 (*er2 ke1* = ear~subject = otology) doctor examines patient 掇耳膜 (*er3 mo2* = ear-membrane = ear-drum), installs 助聽器 (*zhu4 ting4 qi4* = assist-hearing-machine = hearing aid). 聾子 (*long2 zi0* = deaf-son = 聾人 *long2 ren2* = deaf-person) has damaged 聽覺 (*ting1 jue2* = hearing/listening~sense = sense of hearing), 聽不見 (*ting1 bu4 jian4* = hear-not~see = cannot hear).

震耳欲聾 (*zhen1 er2 yu4 long2* = shake-ear~would~deaf) describes deafening sounds. 裝聾扮啞 (*zhuang1 long2 ban4 ya3* = pretend~deaf-make-up~mute) means pretending not to hear/know.

by Diana Yue