

# 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 diet abstinence

欲

Putonghua pronunciation: *yü4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yuk6*

Meanings: desire, craving, yearning, lust, greed

欲 = 意欲 (*yi4 yü4* = idea~want) = intent/yearning, 欲念 (*yü4 nian4* = desire~idea = urge), 欲望 (*yü4 wang4* = lust~hope = desire). 欲 also means 快將 (*kuai4 jiang1* = soon~will).

山雨欲來 (*shan1 yü3 yü4 lai2* = mountain~rain~soon~will~come) describes atmosphere of approaching storm/crisis. Debt-ridden businessman 欲罷不能 (*yü4 ba4 bu4 neng2* = want~stop~no~able = wants to but cannot quit), 欲哭無淚 (*yü4 ku1 wu2 lei4* = wants-to~cry~no~tears = is miserable beyond tears).

飲食男女人之大欲 (*yin3 shi2 nan2 nü ren2 zhi1 da4 yü4* = drink~eat~man~woman~mankind~'s~big~desire) = food/gluttony and sex are mankind's foremost desires. Sage advises: 無欲乃剛 (*wu2 yü4 nai3 gang1* = no~want/desire~then~strong = Don't fancy ambitions/greed; then you can stand firm).