

# 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 promotion

賀

Putonghua pronunciation: *he4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hoh6*

Meanings: offer congratulations, offer gift to celebrate

賀 = 加 (*jia1*, add) + 貝 (*bei4*, seashell/money), means congratulating someone by offering gift/words: 賀卡 (*he4 ka3* = congratulatory~card), 賀電 (*he4 dian4* = congratulatory~telegram), 賀禮 (*he4 li3* = congratulatory~gift).

Birthday boy receives 祝賀 (*zhu1 he4* = blessings~congratulations). Party-guests 道賀 (*dao4 he4* = say~congratulations = make congratulatory remarks), 致賀詞 (*zhi4 he4 ci2* = deliver~congratulatory~speech), 敬酒 (*jing4 jiu3* = respect~wine = raise toast). People visit relatives/friends during Chinese New Year to 賀歲 (*he4 sui4* = congratulate~year = celebrate the New Year).

賀客盈門 (*he4 ke4 ying2 men2* = congratulate~guests~fill~doors = Many visitors come to congratulate) newly-promoted CEO: “可喜可賀!” (*ke3 xi3 ke3 he4* = can~happy~can~congratulate = This is really worth rejoicing and celebrating!