

# 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 hawkers

販

Putonghua pronunciation: *fan 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faan 3*

Meanings: selling, hawking, hawker

販 = 賣 (*mai4*) = sell. 小販 (*xiao3 fan4* = small-seller) = hawker: 報販 (*bao4 fan4* = newspaper~vendor), 魚販 (*yu2 fan4* = fish~monger). 戰爭販子 (*zhan4 zheng1 fan4 zi3* = war~conflict~sell~er) are warmongers. 販毒 (*fan4 du2* = hawk/sell~poison = trafficking dangerous drugs), 販賣人口 (*fan4 mai4 ren2 kou3* = hawk~sell~persons~mouths = white slavery) are criminal offences.

販夫走卒 (*fan4 fu1 zou3 zu2* = sell~man~run~pawn = hawkers, messengers etc.) means lower class workers collectively.

Hawkers display goods on 攤子 (*tan1 zi3* = display~stand~diminutive = mini-stands), 叫賣 (*jiao4 mai4* = call~sell = yell “Come buy!”) Seeing 警察 (*jing3 cha2* = warn~inspect = police), unlicensed hawkers 走鬼 (*zou2 gui3* = Cantonese *jau2 gwai2* = run/flee~ghost = flee police).