

# 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 1949 Liberation



Putonghua pronunciation: *gong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gung6*

Meanings: together, common, share

共 = 共同 (*gong4 tong2* = share-same = together/shared): 共事 (*gong4 shi4* = together-serve = serve same company/boss), 共享 (*gong4 xiang3* = together-enjoy = share joy/benefit), 共識 (*gong4 shi1* = common-know/identify = consensus), 共黨 (*gong4 dang3* = common-party = communist party). Head-count: 共十人 (*gong4 shi2 ren2* = altogether-ten~people).

Lovers vow 生死與共 (*sheng1 si3 yu3 gong4* = live-die~with-together = never forsake each other). 不共戴天之仇 (*bu4 gong4 dai4 tian1 zhi1 chou2* = cannot-together-bear/live-under~same-sky~such~offence) means unforgivable wrong done to someone by enemy (e.g. killing of parent).

Idealists hope everyone can 共存共榮 (*gong4 cun2 gong4 rong2* = together-exist-together~propser = co-exist and thrive side-by-side) in 共和國 (*gong4 he2 guo2* = together-harmony~state = republic).

by Diana Yue