

# 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 hunting

Putonghua pronunciation: *fu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fuk6*

Meanings: lie prostrate, crouch, bend, yield, lurk, ambush, subdue, conquer

Ideogram 伏 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 犬 *qūan3*, dog) indicates person crouching/bending, dog-like: 伏地 (*fu2 di4* = crouch-on-ground), 伏案 (*fu2 an4* = crouch-on-desk, writing/napping). Waves/noises 此起彼伏 (*ci3 qi3 bi3 fu2* = this~rise~that~drop = rise and fall).

Spy 埋伏 (*mai2 fu2* = bury~crouch = lurks/hides). 伏兵 (*fu2 bing1* = hiding~soldiers) 伏擊 (*fu2 ji1* = crouch~attack = ambush) enemy. Rash attackers 中伏 (*zhong4 fu2* = get-hit-by~ambush). Symptoms surface after disease's 潛伏期 (*qian2 fu2 qi1* = dive~hide~period = latent/incubation period).

Exorciser 伏魔 (*fu2 mo1* = subdues~devils/demons). Criminal 伏法 (*fu2 fa3* = subdued~law = is arrested/convicted). 不甘雌伏 (*bu4 gan1 ci2 fu2* = un~willing~female~crouch/submit) describes subdued woman/person keen to rise again, perform, take charge.