

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:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th 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 choirs

諧

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *haai4*

Meanings: harmony, accord, complete, meaningful, funny

諧 (言 = *yan2*, speak + 皆 = *jie1*, together) = speaking in unison. 和諧 (*he2 xie2* = merge/calm/peace~accord) describes peaceful/meaningful relationship. 事諧 (*shi4 xie2* = action~harmonized) means action completed. 琴瑟和諧 (*qin2 se1 he2 xie2* = lute~zither~peaceful~harmonious) describes loving/steady marriage. 房事不諧 (*fang2 shi4 bu4 xie2* = room~affairs~not~harmonious) means couple's sex life is unsatisfactory.

Clown delivers 詼諧 (*hui1 xie2* = funny~meaningful = funny) lines. 亦莊亦諧 (*yi4 zhuang1 yi4 xie2* = also~serious~also~humorous) describes speech that is both serious and humorous.

Composer 諧調 (*xie2 tiao2* = harmonizes~adjusts) musical chords. Conductor explains musical composition's 和聲 (*he2 sheng1* = harmonious~sound = harmonic structure), but singers 音律不諧 (*yin1 lu4 bu4 xie2* = sound~rules~no~harmonious = produce discord).

by Diana Yue