

# 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 Achilles



Putonghua pronunciation: *yong3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yung5*

Meanings: brave, decisive, daring, powerful, valor, courage, audacity, nerve, guts

勇 (radical力 *li4*, strength) = daring/might: penitent's 勇氣 (*yong3 qi4* = brave-spirit = courage) to admit fault, fire-squad's 英勇 (*ying1 yong3* = heroic~brave) action, gladiator's 神勇 (*shen2 yong3* = godlike-physical-might/ferocity). Youths fight with 血氣之勇 (*xue3 qi4 zhi1 yong3* = blood~breath~s~audacity = impulsive daring).

勇敢 (*yong3 gan3* = brave~daring) David challenged 勇猛 (*yong3 meng3* = powerful~fierce) Goliath. 007智勇雙全 (*zhi4 yong3 shuang1 qüan2* = wise/intelligent~brave~both~perfect = has brains and can fight).

Homer's 史詩 (*shi3 shi1* = history/epic-poems) described 諸神 (*zhu1 shen2* = many~gods = gods/goddesses) and 英雄 (*ying1 xiong2* = heroic~mighty = heroes). 阿喀里斯 (*A4 Ke4 Li3 Si1* = "Achilles"-transliterated) was Greece's greatest 勇士 (*yong3 shi4* = brave/fierce/mighty~warrior).