

# 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 resting

歇

Putonghua pronunciation: *xie1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hit3*

Meanings: stop, halt, pause, rest

作 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 乍 *zha4*, sudden) = arise/make/create: 作用 (*zuo4 yong4* = function~effect), 作風 (*zuo4 feng1* = person's behavioral-style). 雷電大作 (*lei2 dian4 da4 zuo4* = thunder~electricity~big~arise) = thunder and lightning suddenly/fiercely strike. Monsters 作怪 (*zuo4 guai4* = cause~disturbances). Warmongers 作孽 (*zuo4 nie4* = commit~evil~deeds).

工作 (*gong1 zuo4* = work~do) = work. 作家 (*zuo4 jia1* = compose~master = writer/author) produces 作品 (*zuo4 pin3* = work~composition/opus). 性工作者 (*xing4 gong1 zuo4 zhe3* = sex~work~do~people) = sex-workers.

Farmers 日出而作, 日入而息 (*ri4 chu1 er2 zuo4, ri4 ru4 er2 xil* = sun~out~and~work, sun~in~and~rest = follow daylight hours). Pub-goers 飲酒作樂 (*yin3 jiu3 zuo4 le4* = drink~wine/liquore~make~merry).