

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 natural harmony



Putonghua pronunciation: **he2**

Cantonese pronunciation: **hap6**

Meaning: combine, unite, join, fit, close, suitable, together

合 (^ *ji2*, enclosed triangle + 口 *kou3*, mouth) = 吻合 (*wen3 he2* = muzzle/mouth-close/fit = match/fit), 適合 (*shi1 he2* = suit-fit), Wounds 癒合 (*yü4 he2* = heals-closes/mends), Partners 合作 (*he2 zuo2* = together-work = collaborate), Lovers 結合 (*jie2 he2* = tie-knot-join = marry).

合情 (*he2 qing2* = fit-feeling) = emotionally-understandable/approvable, 合理 (*he2 li3* = fit-reason) = justifiable/reasonable, 合法 (*he2 fa3* = fit-law) = legitimate/lawful.

Daoist meditates, 合眼 (*he2 yan3* = closes-eyes), 合掌 (*he2 zhang3* = presses-palms-together), spirit 與天地冥合 (*yü3 tian1 di4 ming3 he2* = with-heaven-and-earth-mystically-unite = achieves mystical unity with universe/nature). Chinese philosophers seek 天人合一 (*tian1 ren2 he2 yi1* = heaven-human-unite-one = to make heart/mind blend with universe/nature).

by Diana Yue