

# 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:

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 progress

衝

Putonghua pronunciation: *chong1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chung1*

Meaning: towards, dash, rush against, charge

衝 (radical 行 *xing2*, walk + 重 *zhong4*, heavy) = dash/charge: 衝力 (*chong1 li4* = charging-force/stamina), 衝線 (*chong1 xian4* = cross-finishing-line), 衝浪 (*chong1 lang4* = rush-at-waves = surfing), 衝撞 (*chong1 zhuang4* = rush-knock/push = rude offence). Plane 衝上雲霄 (*chong1 shang4 yun2 xiao1* = rush-up-to-clouds-rain-clouds = soars into sky).

衝動 (*chong1 dong4* = rush-move = rash, easily enraged) mobsters 衝擊 (*chong1 ji1* = charge-attack = challenge) law-and-order, 衝過 (*chong1 guo4* = charge-across) cordon, 橫衝直撞 (*heng2 chong1 zhi2 zhuang4* = horizontal-charge-vertical-knock/hit = push, knock about), 衝突 (*chong1 tu4* = charge-assault = clash) with police.

Hero musters up 衝勁 (*chong1 jing4* = fighting strength/spirit), 衝鋒陷陣 (*chong1 feng1 xian4 zhen4* = charge-spear-head-conquers-military-formation = fights/beats enemy).

by Diana Yue