

# 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 hunting

捕

Putonghua pronunciation: *bu3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bo6*

Meanings: catch, apprehend, arrest, capture

捕 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand) means catch/capture: 捕獵 (*bu3 lie4* = catch-hunt), 捕魚 (*bu3 yu2* = catch~fish). Cats 捕鼠 (*bu3 shu3* = catch~mice). Tigers 捕食 (*bu3 shi2* = catch-and~eat) deer. 捕鯨 (*bu3 jing1* = catch~whale) = whaling.

Policeman 追捕 (*zhui1 bu3* = chase~catch = pursues) criminal. Tabloids 捕風捉影 (*bu3 feng1 zhuo1 ying3* = catch~wind~grab~shadow = catch/spread rumors). Idiom 螳螂捕蟬，黃雀在後 (*tang2 lang2 bu3 chan2, huang2 que1 zai4 hou4* = praying-mantis~hunts~cicada, yellow~bird/sparrow~is~behind) describes game of deceit/chase: predator hunts prey, unaware of dangerous bigger predator.

Da Vinci 捕捉 (*bu3 zhuo1* = caught~captured) Mona Lisa's smile. Salinger wrote 麥田捕手 (*mai4 tian2 bu3 shou3* = wheat/rye~field~catch~hand = Catcher in the Rye).