

# 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 Revolution of 1911



Putonghua pronunciation: *xüe4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *huet3*

Meanings: blood

血 = 血液 (*xüe4 yi4* = blood-liquid = blood). Workers earn wages with 血汗 (*xüe4 han4* = blood-and-sweat). Artists paint with 心血 (*xin1 xüe4* = heart-blood = mental/spiritual energy/dedication). Great novels/movies feature 有血有肉 (*you3 xüe4 you3 rou4* = has-blood-has-flesh = vivid/realistic) characters. 冷血 (*leng3 xüe4* = cold-blooded) oppressors commit 血腥 (*xüe4 xing1* = bloody-stinking) crimes. 血流成河 (*xüe4 liu2 cheng2 he2* = blood-flows-forms-streams) describes cruel massacre.

熱血 (*re4 xüe4* = hot-blood = zealous) patriots 灑熱血 (*sa3 re4 xüe4* = spill-hot-blood = sacrifice body/life), vow: 血債血償! (*xüe4 zhai4 xüe4 chang2* = blood-debts-blood-repay = Repay blood with blood!), advocate 流血革命 (*liu2 xüe4 ge2 ming4* = flow-blood-change-fate = revolution using violence).

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