

# 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 trains

動

Putonghua pronunciation: *dong4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *dung6*

Meaning: move, movement

動 (radical 力 *li4*, strength/power) = 動作 (*dong3 zuo2* = movement/action). 動物 (*dong4 wu4* = moving-thing = animals) 跑動 (*pao3 dong4* = run-move). 流動 (*liu2 dong4* = flows-moves) in 動脈 (*dong4 mai4* = move-pulse = arteries), 動機 (*dong4 ji1* = move-chance) = motive/motivation.

Engineers 動員 (*dong4 yuan2* = move-members = are mobilized), 動手 (*dong4 shou3* = move-hands = get started) to build 動車組 (*dong4 che1 zu3* = momentum-car-multiple-unit = rail motor coaches = high-speed trains). 動力 (*dong4 li4* = moving-strength/momentum) makes train 開動 (*kai1 dong4* = start moving), wheels 滾動 (*gun3 dong4* = roll-and-move).

Investors 心動 (*xin1 dong4* = heart-move = are interested), 主動 (*zhu3 dong4* = master-move = actively) buy railway stocks.

by Diana Yue