

# 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 false hopes

Putonghua pronunciation: *wang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mong6*

Meanings: look, see, observe, fame

Pictogram/ideogram 望 indicates elevated person looking afar: 望見 (*wang4 jian4* = look~see/espionage), 眺望 (*tiao4 wang4* = look-aside/afar~look = look afar), 望遠鏡 (*wang4 yuan3 jing4* = look/see~far~mirror = telescope/binoculars). 探望 (*tan4 wang4* = probe~look/see) = visit.

希望 (*xi1 wang4* = hope~see) = hope: 有望 (*you3 wang4* = has~hope = likely/hopeful), 無望 (*wu2 wang4* = has-no~hope), 絕望 (*jue2 wang4* = end~hope = hopeless/desperate). 仰望 (*yang3 wang4* = raise-head/eyes~look) = adore. 望族 (*wang4 zu2* = distinguished~clan/family) has 名望 (*ming2 wang4* = name~adored = fame). 望穿秋水 (*wang4 qian1 qiu1 shui3* = look~break~autumn~water, i.e. eyes) = keenly awaiting person/event.

Traditional Chinese doctors diagnose illnesses by 望 (*wang4*, looking/observing), 聞 (*wen2*, hearing/listening), 問 (*wen4*, asking questions), 切 (*qie4*, analyzing/matching).

by Diana Yue