

# 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 growth

Putonghua pronunciation: *chang2, zhang3*  
Cantonese pronunciation: *cheung4, jeung2*  
Meanings: long, eternal, grow, expand

Adjective 長 (*chang2*) = long: 長度 (*chang2 du4* = length-measurement), 長髮 (*chang2 fa3* = long-hair), 長江 (*chang2 jiang1* = Long-River = Yangtze River). 長眠 (*chang2 mian2* = long-sleep) = the dead's eternal sleep.

Verb/adjective 長 (*zhang3*) = elder/grow/expand: 生長 (*sheng1 zhang3* = born-grow = grow), 增長 (*zheng1 zhang3* = add-grow = expand/expansion), 長子 (*zhang3 zi3* = eldest-son), 長官 (*zhang3 guan1* = senior-officer).

靈長類 (*ling2 zhang3 lei4* = soul-elder-species) = primates. Plants 長葉 (*zhang3 ye4* = grow-leaves), 長實 (*zhang3 shi2* = bear-fruit). 長輩 (*zhang3 bei* = elderly-generation = seniors) watch kids 長大 (*zhang3 da4* = grow-big = grow up), 長高 (*zhang3 gao1* = grow-tall), 長肉 (*zhang3 rou4* = grow-flesh = put on flesh/muscles).