

# 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 kitchens

熱

Putonghua pronunciation: *re4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yit6*

Meaning: hot, heat, heated, feverish

熱 (radical 灬 = 火 *huo3*, fire) means hot/heat. 冷熱 (*leng3 re4* = cold-hot) = temperature range. 炎熱 (*yan2 re4* = fiery-hot = hot) describes 熱天 (*re4 tian1* = hot-sky = hot weather/days)

Athlete 熱愛 (*re4 ai4* = hot-like/love = crazily loves) sports, Romeo and Juliet 熱戀 (*re4 lian4* = hot-love = are passionately in love), 面紅耳熱 (*mian4 hong2 er3 re4* = face-red-ears-hot) describes people arguing heatedly. Economists warn: “樓市過熱!” (*lou2 shi4 guo4 re4* = “housing-market-is-over-heated!”)

Political issue 熱辣辣 (*re4 la4 la4* = hot-spicy-hot-spicy-hot = gets heated). Warning: those who 怕熱 (*pa4 re4* = fear/dislike the heat) should leave the kitchen. On-lookers 看熱鬧 (*kan4 re4 nao4* = watch-hot-noisy = watch the fun/noise/hullabaloo).