

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:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th 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 the prodigal son



Putonghua pronunciation: *hui3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fooi3*

Meanings: rue, regret, repent, renounce, retract

悔 (radical ↑ = 心, *xin1* = heart) = 後悔 (*hou4 hui4* = afterwards~regret = regretting something afterwards). Killer 悔恨 (*hui4 hen4* = regret-hate = strongly regrets) having committed killings but 悔之已晚 (*hui4 zhi1 yi3 wan3* = regret-it-already~evening = his regret came too late).

悔 also means 反悔 (*fan3 hui4* = overturn~regret = retract): 悔婚 (*hui4 hun1* = regret~marriage = withdraw promise to marry), 悔約 (*hui4 yue4* = regret~agreement = break contract).

Prisoner 悔過 (*hui4 guo4* = regret-fault/wrong = admits he has committed wrongdoings), submits 悔過書 (*hui4 guo4 shu1* = regret-fault/wrong~letter = written confession). Prodigal son 悔悟 (*hui4 wu4* = regret/understand = repents, achieves enlightenment), 悔改 (*hui4 gai3* = regret~change = repents, reforms himself).