

# 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 Chinese sun god

射

Putonghua pronunciation: *she1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *se6*

Meanings: shoot

射 = shoot/release arrow/bullet/missile. Hunter 射箭 (*she4 jian4* = shoots~arrow), 射殺 (*she4 sha1* = shoots~kills) deer. Gunman 射擊 (*she4 ji1* = shoot~hit = fires shots), 射中 (*she4 zhong4* = shoots~hits) target. Strategy 射人先射馬 (*she4 ren2 xian1 she4 ma3* = shoot~person-first~shoot-horse) is effective — hit horse, rider will fall.

射精 (*she4 jing1* = shoots~sperms) = copulating male's ejaculation. 噴射機 (*pen1 she4 ji1* = jet~shoot-machine/airplane) = jet aircraft. Missile's 射程 (*she4 cheng2* = shoot~path) = shooting range. 核輻射 (*he2 fu1 she4* = nuclear~wheel-spoke/converge~shoot) = nuclear radiation.

In myth 羿射九日 (*Yi4 she4 jiu3 ri4* = Yi-shot-down-nine~suns), 神射手 (*shen2 she4 shou3* = god-shoot~hand = mighty/miraculous archer) Hou Yi shot down nine suns, saving the world.

by Diana Yue