

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 conversion to Buddhism

修

Putonghua pronunciation: *xiu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sau1*

Meanings: trim, decorate, modify, revise, build, repair, study, practice

修 = 修飾 (*xiu1 shi1* = trim-decorate). 修甲 (*xiu1 jia3* = trim/treat-nails) = manicure. 不修邊幅 (*bu4 xiu1 bian1 fu2* = no~trim~side~hem/edge = carelessly groomed, untidy/unkept/disheveled).

修 = make/repair/revise: 修建 (*xiu1 jian4* = build-construct), 修壩 (*xiu1 ba4* = build-dams), 修車 (*xiu1 che1* = repair-cars). 修理 (*xiu1 li3* = treat-handle) means repair or beat up. 修辭 (*xiu1 ci2* = decorate-words) = rhetoric. Editor 修改 (*xiu1 gai3* = trim~alter = corrects/revises) texts. In 1960s China denounced 蘇修 (*Su1 xiu1* = "So"-viet-transliterated-revise = Soviet/Russian revisionism).

Taoists 修煉 (*xiu1 lian4* = practice-refine/smelt = practice spiritual/mystical exercises). Buddhists 修行 (*xiu1 xing2* = study-practice = study and practice Buddhist beliefs). 修道院 (*xiu1 dao4 yuan4* = study-way/belief-college) = monastery/ abbey.