

# 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 drinking



Putonghua pronunciation: *jiu3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jau2*

Meanings: wine, liquor

酒 has radical 氵 (= 水 *shui3*, water). Restaurants serve 葡萄酒 (*pu2 tao2 jiu3* = grape-wines), 清酒 (*qing1 jiu3* = clear-liquor/wine = Japanese sake). Party host 祝酒 (*zhu1 jiu3* = congratulate-wine = proposes toast). 酒店 (*jiu3 dian4* = wine-shop) means hotel, not pub.

Drinkers 喝酒 (*he1 jiu3* = drink-wine/liquor/beer). Connoisseurs 品酒 (*pin3 jiu3* = assess/sample-wine = taste/savor wine). Vulgar men like 酒色財氣 (*jiu3 se1 cai2 qi4* = wine-color/women-money-gas = vices: drinking, womanizing, gambling/spending, bluffing).

醉酒鬼 (*zui4 jiu3 gui3* = drunken-wine/liquor-ghost) = guy who is drunk. 酒鬼 (*jiu3 gui3* = wine/liquor-ghost) = alcoholic. 酒駕 (*jiu3 jia4* = wine/liquor-drive-car = driving after drinking wine/liquor), 醉駕 (*zui4 jia4* = drunken-drive-car = driving when drunk) are legal offences.