

# 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 cooking shows



Putonghua pronunciation: *jù4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gui6*

Meanings: tool, utensil, equipment, talent, furnished, detailed

Verb transitive 具 means have/possess. London 具有 (*jù4 you3* = equip~have = has) urban charm, 具備 (*jù4 bei4* = equipped~available = has) adequate facilities to host Olympics. 具象 (*jù4 xiang4* = having-image = figurative) art is not 抽象 (*chou1 xiang4* = extract-form = abstract). 具體 (*jù4 ti3* = having-body) describes concrete/specific plans/actions.

Noun 具 means 器具 (*qi4 jù4* = instruments~tools): 工具 (*gong1 jù4* = work~tools), 餐具 (*can1 jù4* = dining~tools), 農具 (*nong2 jù4* = farming~tools). Poet has outstanding 才具 (*cai2 jù4* = talent~equipment = talent). However, 陽具 (*yang2 jù4* = male/yang-force~tool) means penis.

廚具 (*chu2 jù4* = kitchen/cooking~utensils) include 刀 (*dao1*, knife), 剪 (*jian3*, scissors/shears), 鍋 (*guo1*, pot/pan), 盤 (*pan1*, bowl/plate), 杓 (*shuo2*, spoon/dipper), 鏟 (*chan3*, spatula).

by Diana Yue