

# 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 resting

服

Putonghua pronunciation: *fu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fuk6*

Meanings: clothes, be convinced, respect, serve, eat, take

Noun 服 (radical 月 *yue4*, moon) = 衣服 (*yi1 fu2* = coat~clothes = clothes): 工作服 (*gong1 zuo2 fu2* = work~do~clothes = work uniform), 喪服 (*sang1 fu2* = mourning~clothes).

Transitive verb 服 has multiple meanings. 服務 (*fu2 wu4* = serve~chores = serve/service), 服刑 (*fu2 xing2* = serve~jail-sentence), 佩服 (*pei4 fu2* = esteem~respect), 服從 (*fu2 cong2* = respect~follow/obey). Loser 服輸 (*fu2 shu1* = respect~defeat = admits he is inferior).

吞服 (*tun1 fu2* = swallow~take) = swallow. Patient 服湯藥 (*fu2 tang1 yao4* = take~soup~medicine = takes medicinal concoction). Chinese medicine requires 多服 (*duo1 fu2* = many~takings/dosages) to be effective. Un-cured patient 服毒自殺 (*fu2 du2 zi4 sha1* = swallow~poison~self~kill = commits suicide by swallowing poison).