

# Character Builder 您好學？

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 faith

疑

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi4*

Meaning: suspect, suspicious, uncertain, guess, doubt, suspicion, unsolvable

疑 means uncertainty/doubt: 可疑 (*ke3 yi2* = can-suspect = suspicious/questionable/fishy), 懷疑 (*huai2 yi2* = bosom/embrace-suspicion = harbor suspicion/skepticism), 疑雲 (*yi2 yun2* = doubt-cloud = cloud of suspicion), 半信半疑 (*ban4 xin4 ban4 yi2* = half-believing-half-doubting), 無疑 (*wu2 yi2* = no-doubt, certainly).

Employees have 疑問 (*yi2 wen4* = suspecting-questions = queries). Employer dispels their 疑惑 (*yi2 hua4* = doubts-mis-understandings). Detective sees 疑點 (*yi2 dian3* = questionable-point/issue), 起疑 (*qi3 yi2* = begins/develops-suspicion). Person who 疑神疑鬼 (*yi2 shen2 yi2 gui3* = suspect-gods-suspect-ghosts = suspects anything/everything) often 猜疑 (*cail yi2* = doubts-distrusts) others.

多疑的多馬 (*duo1 yi2 de0 Duo1 Ma3* = many/much-doubt-'s-"Thom-mas"-transliterated) is doubting Thomas, Jesus' disciple who wouldn't believe Jesus had risen from the dead.

by Diana Yue