

# 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 rejuvenation

Putonghua pronunciation: *meng3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *maang5*

Meaning: fierce, strong, forceful, powerful, violent, sudden

猛 (犭 = 犬 *quān3*, dog + 孟 *meng4* = first-born) means fierce/brave: 猛獸 (*meng3 shou4* = fierce-beast), 猛禽 (*meng3 qin2* = fierce-bird), 猛烈 (*meng3 lie4* = powerful-violent). 猛將 (*meng3 jiang4* = fierce-general = fierce/brave/mighty warrior) has 威猛 (*wei1 meng3* = heroic/macho-powerful) image.

Footballers 猛衝 (*meng3 chong1* = force-ahead), 猛攻 (*meng3 gong1* = vehemently-attack). Boxer 猛撲 (*meng3 pu1* = swiftly-leaps/pounces), 猛力 (*meng3 li4* = forcefully-powerfully) hits opponent, gives 勇猛 (*yong3 meng3* = brave-powerful) performance. New business shows 迅猛 (*xun4 meng3* = quick-powerful) development.

Lazy student 猛然悔悟 (*meng3 ran2 hui4 wu4* = suddenly-regrets-understands = is suddenly enlightened), studies hard, grades 突飛猛進 (*tu4 fei1 meng3 jin4* = suddenly-fly-powerful-advance = show rapid, spectacular improvement).

by Diana Yue