

# Character Builder

# 您好學? 呀

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 surgical operations

切

Putonghua pronunciation: **qie1, qie4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **chit3**

Meaning: cut, incise, dis sever, grate, intensive, imminent, anxious

切 (radical 刀 **dao1**, knife/blade) means 切開 (**qie4 kai1** = cut/dissect-open/apart), 切斷 (**qie4 duan4** = cut-up/loose), 橫切面 (**heng2 qie1 mian4** = horizontal/crosswise-cut-face = cross-section); also: 急切 (**ji1 qie4** = urgent-imminent), 切齒 (**qie4 chi3** = grind-teeth angrily).

Police 救人心切 (**jiu4 ren2 xin1 qie4** = save-person-heart-anxious = anxious to save lives), shoots hijackers. Partitioned country feels 切膚之痛 (**qie4 fu1 zhi1 tong4** = cut-skin-'s-pain = direct pain/problem), 割切 (**ge1 qie1** = cuts-severs) ties with invaders for 切身利益 (**qie4 shen1 li4 yi1** = own-self's-benefits-interests).

Surgeon studies 切片 (**qie1 pian4** = incised-slice = biopsy), 切除 (**qie1 chu2** = cuts-removes) tumor, puts patient in 深切治療 (**shen1 qie4 zhi4 liao2** = deep-intensive-treat-heal = intensive-care) ward.

by Diana Yue