

# Character Builder 您好嗎? 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 the Third World

施

Putonghua pronunciation: *shi 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *si 1*

Meanings: apply, give, bestow

施 = 施行 (*shi xing 12* = apply~act = execute): 施政 (*shi zheng 14* = execute~rule = administrate).

Jesus preached "施比受更為有福" (*shi bi shou geng wei you fu 1344232* = give~compare~receive~even-more~is~has~blessing = "It is more blessed to give than to receive"). 布施 (*bu shi 41* = spread~bestow) = alms-giving. Oxfam's Chinese name is "樂施會" (*le shi hui 414* = enjoy/gladly~give~club/society).

Bankrupt communities need 援助 (*yuan zhu 24* = help~support = aid): 贈醫 (*zeng yi 41* = gift~doctor = medical aid), 施飯 (*shi fan 14* = give~cooked-rice = freely-given food supplies). However, proud people may think accepting philanthropic 施捨 (*shi she 13* = bestow~parting-from = money/things/favour bestowed patronizingly/condescendingly) is humiliating.