

# 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 kitchens



Putonghua pronunciation: *pēng1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *paang1*

Meanings: cook

烹 (radical 灬 = water/fire) = 烹飪 (*pēng1 ren3* = cook~done) means cooking: 烹魚 (*pēng1 yu2* = cook~fish), 烹羊 (*pēng1 yang2* = cook~lamb), 烹茶 (*pēng1 cha2* = boil/brew~tea). 烹調 (*pēng1 tiao2* = cook~adjust-flavor) = cook skillfully.

Housewives study 烹飪書 (*pēng1 ren4 shu1* = cook~books), share 烹飪心得 (*pēng1 ren4 xin1 de2* = cook~done~heart~achieve = cooking tips). Avant-garde restaurants promote 分子烹飪 (*fen4 zi3 pēng1 ren2* = separate~seed~cook~done = molecular cuisine).

Philosopher 老子 (*Lao2 Zi3* = Lao-zi, founder of Daoism)'s saying “治大國若烹小鮮” (*zhi4 da4 guo2 ruo4 pēng1 xiao3 xian1* = rule~big~state-as-if~cooking~small~fresh-fish) means “Ruling a country and cooking a small fish require the same principle (don't give it too much turning/interference/change)”.

by Diana Yue