

# 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 borrowing arrows

謀

Putonghua pronunciation: *mou2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mau4*

Meanings: seek, plot, strategize

謀 means make plans/efforts with aim/purpose: 謀生 (*mou2 sheng1* = seek/make-a-living), 謀反 (*mou2 fan3* = plot-rebellion), 謀殺 (*mou2 sha1* = plot-kill = murder). 不謀而合 (*bu4 mou2 er2 he2* = un-planned-and/yet-agree) = separately arrive at similar views/plans.

Schemers plan 陰謀 (*yin1 mou2* = dark-plot = conspiracy). Corrupt officials 以權謀私 (*yi3 quan2 mou2 si1* = with-power-see-private/self = use their power for selfish purposes). Rash people are 有勇無謀 (*you3 yong3 wu2 mou2* = has-bravery-lack-strategy = daring but brainless).

諸葛亮 (*Zhu1 Ge2 Liang4*) was also called 孔明 (*Kong3 Ming2*). His 計謀 (*ji4 mou2* = scheme-plot) which made the enemy send him arrows is called 孔明借箭 (*Kong3 Ming2 jie4 jian4* = Kongming borrowed arrows).

by Diana Yue