

# 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 the *nouveau-riche*



Putonghua pronunciation: *fa1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faat3*

Meanings: start, dispatch, develop, express, bloom

發 = start/send/develop. Events 發生 (*fa1 sheng1* = start-born = happen). Traveler 出發 (*chu1 fa1* = out~start = starts journey). Illness 發作 (*fa1 zuo2* = start~act = surfaces). 發現 (*fa1 xian4* = start~show) = discover/discovery. 發明 (*fa1 ming2* = start~understanding) = invent/invention.

Secretary 發信 (*fa1 xin4* = sends~letters). Central bank 發表 (*fa1 biao3* = pronounces/publishes/issues) declaration, 發行 (*fa1 xing2* = dispatch~distribute = issues) bonds. Glamor girl 容光煥發 (*rong2 guang1 huan4 fa1* = visage~light~radiant~bloom = looks radiant).

Colloquial expression 發達 (*fa1 da2* = start/develop~arrive) means get rich. Businessman 發揮 (*fa1 hui1* = develop~wave = uses/manifests) business skills, 發展 (*fa1 zhan3* = starts~develops) career, 發大達 (*fa1 da4 da2* = start/develop~big~arrive = acquires huge fortune).

by Diana Yue