

# 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 moving



(radical 心 *xin1* = heart)

Putonghua pronunciation: *ci2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chi4*

Meanings: kindness, mercy

慈 is noun/adjective meaning kind-hearted. Parents are 慈愛 (*ci2 ai4* = kind~loving). 慈母 (*ci2 mu3* = kind~mother) = loving/caring mother. Philanthropists donate to 慈善 (*ci2 shan4* = kind~good = charity).

佛陀 (*fo2 tuo2* = Buddha) 捨身飼虎 (*she3 shen1 si4 hu3* = sacrifice~body~feed~tiger = let himself be eaten by a starving mother tiger). Mahayana Buddhism, widespread in China and Japan, worships 菩薩 (*pu2 sa4* = pusas = short for 菩提薩埵 *pu2 ti2 sa4 duo3* = Bodhisattvas).

Bodhisattva 觀音 (*guan1 yin1* = watch~(world's)-sounds/voices = Guanyin = Avalokitesvara) embodies 慈悲 (*ci2 bei1* = kindness~compassion/pity = kindness, grace, mercy). Wives who want to get pregnant and bear sons pray to fertility-goddess 送子觀音 (*song4 zi3 guan1 yin1* = send~son~Guanyin).