

# 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 wound treatment

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhen1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jam1*

Meanings: needle

針 (radical 金 *jin1*, gold/metal) = needle: 針線 (*zhen1 xian4* = needle~thread), 針眼 (*zhen1 yan3* = needle's-eye), 松針 (*song1 zhen1* = pine~needles). 針刺麻醉 (*zhen1 ci4 ma2 zui4* = needle-prick-numb-intoxication) = Chinese traditional acupuncture anesthesia.

Hospitals in China practice 中西醫結合 (*zhong1 xi1 yi1 jie2 he2* = China~West~medicine~tie~combine = Chinese integrative medicine). 針灸 (*zhen1 jiu4* = needle~burn = acupuncture and moxibustion) combines 針刺 (*zhen1 ci4* = needle~prick = insertion of needle into energy-spots under skin = acupuncture) and 艾灸 (*ai4 jiu4* = mugwort~burn = heating energy-spots with mugwort bars).

Acupuncture helps rehabilitation: 減痛 (*jian3 tong4* = reduce/lessen~pain), 加強氣血 (*jia1 qiang2 qi4 xue3* = add~strong~ air/gas~blood = improve flow of energy/qi and blood inside body).