

# 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 drinking



Putonghua pronunciation: *he1, he4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hot3*

Meanings: drink, shout

喝 (*he1*, drink) has radical 口 (*kou3*, mouth). When 口渴 (*kou3 ke1* = mouth~thirsty), we 喝水 (*he1 shui3* = drink~water), 喝茶 (*he1 cha2* = drink~tea). Dating usually begins with 喝咖啡 (*he1 ka1 fei1* = drink~“coffee”-transliterated = going to a coffee place).

Hunger-striker 不吃不喝 (*bu1 chi1 bu1 he1* = won't~eat~won't~drink). Dandy 吃喝玩樂 (*chi1 he1 wan2 le4* = eat~drink~play~merry = indulges in feasting and merry-making). Lonely drinker 喝悶酒 (*he1 men4 jiu3* = drink~bored~liquor/wine = drinks without purpose/pleasure) until 喝醉 (*he1 zui4* = drink~drunk = drunk).

喝 (*he4*) means shout/holler. Elated audience 喝采 (*he4 cai3* = shout~applause). Rude boss 呼喝 (*hu1 he4* = exhale~shout = shout orders to), 喝罵 (*he1 ma4* = loudly~scold/slam) subordinates.