

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:

- 1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged
- 2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high
- 3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high
- 4th 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 winter past-times



Putonghua pronunciation: *he1, he4*
Cantonese pronunciation: *hot3*
Meaning: drink, quaff, shout

喝 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) means shout (*he4*) or drink: 喝水 (*he1 shui3* = drink-water), 喝湯 (*he1 tang1* = drink-soup). 喝茶 (*he1 cha2* = drink-tea) means drink tea or take tea and snacks/dim-sum. Playboys 吃喝玩樂 (*chi1 he1 wan2 le4* = eat-drink-play-enjoy-themselves).

In winter, people in cold countries 喝酒 (*he1 jiu3* = drink-wine/liquor), 喝威士忌 (*he1 wei1 shi4 ji4* = drink-“whi-s-ky”-transliterated), 喝高粱 (*he1 gao1 liang2* = drink-Kao-liang, i.e. sorghum wine), 喝伏特加 (*he1 fu2 te4 jia1* = drink-“vo-d-ka”-transliterated), 大喝特喝 (*da4 he1 te4 he1* = big-drink-special/emphatic-drink = down huge quantities).

If you 喝多了 (*he1 duo1 le0* = drink-much-ed = have drunk too much), you 喝醉 (*he1 zui4* = drink-drunken = get drunk).