

# Character Builder

# 您好學? 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 new-born babies



Putonghua pronunciation: *xüe3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *huet3*

Meaning: blood, hemo-

Pictogram 血 (showing knife cutting 皿 *min3*, vessel/body) means 血液 (*xüe3 ye4* = blood-liquid = blood): 血管 (*xüe3 guan3* = blood-pipe/vessel), 血壓 (*xüe3 ya1* = blood-pressure), 流血 (*liu2 xüe3* = flow-blood = bleed), 血紅 (*xüe3 hong2* = blood-red).

Good drama 有血有肉 (*you3 xüe3 you3 rou4* = has-blood-has-flesh = shows real human nature/feelings). Coolie's wages are 血汗錢 (*xüe3 han4 qian2* = blood-and-sweat-money). 血跡 (*xüe3 ji1* = blood-stains) indicate 血案 (*xüe3 an4* = blood-case = crime involving bloodshed).

Women ooze monthly 經血 (*jing1 xüe3* = period-blood = menstruation discharge). Pregnant woman's 小產 (*xiao3 chan3* = little-birth = miscarriage) causes 血崩 (*xüe3 beng1* = blood-collapse = haemorrhage). New-born baby inherits dad's 血統 (*xüe3 tong3* = blood-lineage).

by Diana Yue