

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 kitchens

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ngai6*

Meanings: art, skill

藝 = 工藝 (*gong1 yi4* = work/craft-skill = crafts), 藝術 (*yi4 shu4* = art-method = fine arts).

Cooking is 手藝 (*shou3 yi4* = hand-skill = clever manual skill). Apprentices follow 名廚 (*ming2 chu2* = name~kitchen = famous/master chefs) to 學藝 (*xue2 yi4* = learn~skill = acquire training): 選料 (*xuan3 liao4* = choose~materials = materials), 刀工 (*dao1 gong1* = knife-work = cutting), 調味 (*tiao2 wei4* = adjust-flavor = flavoring), 烹煮 (*peng1 zhu3* = cook-boil = cooking).

Dishes' 色 (*se1*, color = attractive presentation), 香 (*xiang1*, good smell), 味 (*wei4*, good taste) prove cook's 廚藝 (*chu2 yi4* = kitchen~art = skill/art of cooking). Gourmets specialize in 吃的藝術 (*chi1 de0 yi4 shu4* = eat~'s~art~method = the art of eating).