

# 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 Japanese Invasion



Putonghua pronunciation: *tu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *to4*

Meanings: slaughter

屠 (radical 尸 *shi1*, corpse) means slaughter/kill. Mythological hero 屠龍 (*tu2 long2* = slays~dragon). 屠夫 (*tu2 fu1* = slaughter~man) = butcher. 屠場 (*tu2 chang2* = slaughter~field) = slaughterhouse/abattoir. 屠宰業 (*tu2 zai3 ye4* = slaughter~carve-up~trade) = slaughtering/meat-processing industry.

屠 also means 屠殺 (*tu2 sha1* = butchering~killing) of humans. Cold-blooded soldiers 屠城 (*tu2 cheng2* = slaughter~city = commit massive killings in conquered city). The book The Rape of Nanking describes 1937's 南京大屠殺 (*Nan2 Jing1 da4 tu2 sha1* = Nan~jing~big~butcher~kill = the Nanjing Massacre committed by Japanese army).

Buddhist preaches to killer: 放下屠刀, 立地成佛 (*fang4 xia4 tu2 dao1, li4 di4 cheng2 fo2* = put~down~butcher~knife, stand-on~ground~become~buddha = stop killing, repent, and redemption will be yours rightaway).

by Diana Yue