

# 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 divorce

裂

Putonghua pronunciation: *lie4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lit6*

Meanings: crack, split, break, breach, fissure

裂 (radical 衣 *yi1*, clothes) = 裂開 (*lie4 kai1* = crack/break-open).

Broken mirror has 裂痕 (*lie4 hen2* = crack-mark = crack).

Waves push through dam's 裂縫 (*lie4 feng2* = crack-seam = cracks), create 裂口 (*lie4 kou3* = crack-mouth = wide opening).

裂唇 (*lie4 chun2* = crack-lip) = 兔唇 (*tu4 chun2* = hare-lip) = child's cleft-lip.

Because conspirators 搞分裂 (*gao3 fen1 lie4* = stir-divide-break = stir up divisive actions), country 四分五裂 (*si4 fen1 wu3 lie4* = four-divide-five-break = is split into factions).

新婚夫婦 (*xin1 hun1 fu1 fu4* = new-marry-husband-wife = newly-weds) enjoy 蜜月 (*mi4 yue4* = honey-moon), cannot foresee 感情破裂 (*gan3 qing2 po4 lie4* = feelings-emotions-break-split = breach of love).

by Diana Yue