

# 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 fatty foods

脂

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji1*

Meanings: oil, fat, grease, tallow rouge

脂 (radical 月 = 肉 *rou4*, meat) = fat from animals/seeds: 松脂 (*song1 zhi1* = pine-fat/resin), 脂肪 (*zhi1 fang2* = fat-waist/belly-fat = animal fat). 油脂 (*you2 zhi1* = oil-fat) = grease/olein. 潤滑脂 (*run4 hua4 zhi1* = nourish~smooth~fat) = lubricant.

Tyrant exploits 民脂民膏 (*min2 zhi1 min2 gao1* = people's-fat-people's-lard = public wealth/savings). 胭脂 (*yan1 zhi0* = red-fat) means rouge. 塗脂抹粉 (*tu2 zhi1 mo4 fen3* = paint-rouge-smudge~rouge) means applying cosmetics or glossing over political image/policy.

Eating 豬油 (*zhu1 you2* = pig's~melted-fat = lard), 雞油 (*ji2 you2* = chicken~fat/oil) increases body's content of 飽和脂肪酸 (*bao3 he2 zhi1 fang2 suan1* = satiate~mix~fat~fat~acid = saturated fatty acids). Exercise helps 燒脂 (*shao1 zhi1* = burn-away~fat).

by Diana Yue