

# 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 baths and showers

抹

Putonghua pronunciation: *luo3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *loh2*

Meanings: naked, nude, uncovered, exposed, bare, undress, strip, nudity

Ideogram 裸 (衤 = 衣 *yi1*, clothes + 果 *guo3*, fruit) suggests loin-cloth barely covering body's fruit/lump-like parts (breasts, genitals). 裸體 (*luo3 ti3* = naked~body) = nude/nudity. Porn star 裸胸 (*luo3 xiong1* = bares~chest/breasts). 裸泳 (*luo3 yong3* = naked~swim), 裸跑 (*lu3o pao3* = nude-run/jog) mean swimming/jogging without clothes on.

Bather 赤裸 (*chi1 luo3* = goes bare~naked). Coal seam 裸露 (*luo3 lu4* = naked~exposed = lies open/uncovered) on hillside. Report 赤裸裸暴露 (*chi4 luo3 luo3 bao4 lu4* = bare~naked~naked~expose~show = lays bare) dirty politics.

裸 generates vivid contemporary expressions. 裸婚 (*luo3 hun1* = naked~wed/marry) means getting married frugally without banquet/dowry/house-purchase. Anti-corruption investigations target 裸官 (*luo3 guan1* = naked~bureaucrat = government bureaucrats who keep entire family and assets abroad).