

# 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 the *nouveau-riche*



Putonghua pronunciation: *fu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *foo3*

Meanings: rich, wealthy, wealth

Pictogram 富 shows roof over bulging house, means 富有 (*fu4 you3* = rich~have = wealthy). 富翁 (*fu4 weng1* = rich~old-man) means wealthy man/person.

Parents 勤儉致富 (*qin2 jian4 zhi4 fu4* = diligence~frugality~achieve~rich = amass fortune through hard work and saving). However, 富二代 (*fu4 er4 dai4* = rich~two/second-generation = sons/daughters of rich people) 炫富 (*xuan2 fu4* = flaunt~their~wealth), kindling 仇富心態 (*chou2 fu4 xin1 tai4* = hate~rich~heart~attitude = hate rich people mentality) in public.

Eurozone's 富裕 (*fu4 yu4* = wealthy~plentiful = rich) countries lecture 超支 (*chao1 zhi1* = surpass~expenditure = over-spent) countries: 富起來 (*fu4 qi3 lai2* = rich~rise~come = accumulating wealth) takes years; 喊窮 (*han3 qiong2* = yell~poor = wailing about being poor) doesn't help.

by Diana Yue