

# 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

Putonghua pronunciation: *yù4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yuk6*

Meanings: bathe, bath, wash, cover

Ideogram 浴 (water-drops + 人 *ren2*, person + 口 *kou3*, container/tub) means bathe/cover: 浴室 (*yù4 shi1* = bath-room), 浴缸 (*yù4 gang1* = bath-tub), 淋浴 (*lin2 yù4* = pour~bath = shower), 海浴 (*hai3 yù4* = sea-bathing), 日光浴 (*ri4 guang1 yù4* = sun~light~bath = sun-bathing), 蒸氣浴 (*zheng1 qi4 yù4* = steam~air~bath = steam-bath/sauna). 浴血 (*yù4 xue3* = bathe-in~blood) = engage in bloody/fierce fighting.

沐浴 (*mu4 yù4* = wash-hair~wash) = 洗澡 (*xi3 zao3* = wash~bathe). Chinese 澡堂 (*zao3 tang2* = bath-hall) are public bath-houses. Emperor watches 貴妃出浴 (*gui4 fei1 chu1 yù4* = sexy royal-concubine~bathe-herself in extravagant pool).

On 浴佛節 (*yù4 fo2 jie2* = bathe-Buddha~festival, i.e. Buddha's Birthday) Buddhists put perfume on statues of Buddha.