

# 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 drugs and medicines

方

Putonghua pronunciation: *fang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fong1*

Meanings: square, aspect, direction, method, prescription

方 means 方形 (*fang1 xing2* = square~shape), 方面 (*fang1 mian4* = side~aspect), 方向 (*fang1 xiang4* = aspect~direction), 方域 (*fang1 yu2* = position~region). 東西方 (*dong1 xi1 fang1* = east-west-regions = East and West) leaders announce 方針 (*fang1 zhen1* = direction~point = policies/directives), 方案 (*fang1 an4* = directions~plans) for cooperation.

方法 (*fang1 fa3* = direction~method) = method. Prisoner 千方百計 (*qian1 fang1 bai2 ji4* = thousand~methods-hundred-plots = tries all means) to escape. Bad father 教子無方 (*jiao4 zi3 wu2 fang1* = teach~son~lack~method = cannot teach son manners/decency).

Doctor prescribes 藥方 (*yao4 fang1* = medical~formula/prescription about ingredients, dosage, preparation, usage). Terminally-ill patient hopes 古方 (*gu3 fang1* = ancient~prescription), 秘方 (*mi4 fang1* = secretly-handed-down~prescription) can work miracles.