

# Character Builder 您好學？

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 donations

義

Putonghua pronunciation: *yi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi6*

Meanings: correct, righteous, just, integrity, helping, free-of-charge, charitable

義 (radical 羊 *yang2*, sheep/goat) means 道義 (*dao4 yi4* = correct-path-righteousness = righteous principles), 正義 (*zheng4 yi4* = correct-righteous), 公義 (*gong1 yi4* = public-righteousness = justice), 義士 (*yi4 shi4* = righteous-scholar/soldier/men) fight 不義 (*bu4 yi4* = not-just = injustices).

義 implies free/unconditional help: 義務 (*yi4 wu4* = correct/unconditional-duty = duty/obligation), 義父 (*yi4 fu4* = foster-father), 義子 (*yi4 zi3* = foster-son), 義肢 (*yi4 zhi1* = artificial-limb), 義賣 (*yi4 mai4* = charity-sale). Buddies 義助 (*yi4 zhu4* = unconditionally-help) friends, showing 義氣 (*yi4 qi4* = comaderie/brotherhood-spirit).

Donor funds 義學 (*yi4 xue2* = charity-school), 義莊 (*yi4 zhuang1* = charity-lodge keeping deceased migrants' bodies/bones/coffins), calls it 義不容辭 (*yi4 bu4 rong2 ci2* = righteous/duty-no-allow-refuse = his compelling duty).

by Diana Yue