

# Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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

捐

Putonghua pronunciation: *jūan1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *guen1*

Meanings: abandon, sacrifice, contribute, donate, buy

捐 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand) = 捐出 (*jūan1 chu1* = surrender-out = sacrifice/donate).

Patriot 為國捐軀 (*wei4 guo2 jūan1 qū1* = for-country-sacrifice-body = dies for country). 捐棄前嫌 (*jūan1 qi4 qian2 xian2* = abandon-discard-previous-dislikes) describes antagonists dropping mutual dislikes.

Fund-raisers 募捐 (*mu4 jūan1* = seek-donors/donations). Philanthropists 捐錢 (*jūan1 qian2* = donate-money/funds). Charities need 捐助 (*jūan1 zhu4* = donations-aid). Hospitals need 捐血 (*jūan1 xue3* = give-blood = blood donations), 捐精 (*jūan1 jing1* = donate-sperms = sperm donations), 捐骨髓 (*jūan1 gu3 sui3* = donate-bone-marrow = bone marrow donations), 捐贈器官 (*jūan1 zheng4 qi4 guan1* = donate-give-instrument-official) = organ donation. However, 捐官 (*jūan1 guan1* = donate-official) means paying bribes to obtain an official post.

by Diana Yue