

# 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 hope



Putonghua pronunciation: **wang4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **mong6**

Meaning: view, look, hope, expectation, prospect

望 (radical 月 **yue4**, moon) = look/view/see. 遠望 (**yuan3 wang4** = distant-look) = look far. 一望無際 (**yi1 wang4 wu2 jian4** = one-look/view-no-edge = endless) desert, traveler 望見 (**wang4 jian4** = looks-and-sees) mirage.

Derivatively, 望 means 希望 (**xi1 wang4** = wish-look/see = hope), 欲望 (**yu4 wang4** = desire-hope = desire/yearning), Great 期望 (**qi2 wang4** = period/longing-look = expectations) often end in 失望 (**shi1 wang4** = lose-hope = disappointment). Employee 升職有望 (**sheng1 zhi2 you3 wang4** = rise-job/post-has-hope/prospect = sees promotion in sight), 喜出望外 (**xi3 chu1 wang4 wai4** = gladness-exceed-hope-beyond = is happy beyond expectation).

Christians preach 信望愛 (**xin4 wang4 ai4** = faith-hope-love), 願望 (**yuan4 wang4** = willing-hope = wish for) world peace.

by Diana Yue