

# 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 pretty women

慕

Putonghua pronunciation: *mu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *mol*

Meaning: admire, adore, love, aspire to, envy

慕 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) means 愛慕 (*ai4 mu4* = love-adore), 羨慕 (*xian4 mu4* = envy-admire), 仰慕 (*yang3 mu4* = look-up-to-adore). Music-lovers 慕名而來 (*mu4 ming2 er2 lai2* = admire-name-so-come = drawn by his fame, come) for violinist's performance.

True moralists 饑渴慕義 (*ji1 ke3 mu4 yi4* = hunger-and-thirst-after-righteousness). Colonial subjects who 慕權慕勢 (*mu4 qūan2 mu4 shi4* = adore-authority-adore-power = adore/envy those in high places) are usually 慕洋派 (*mu4 yang2 pai1* = adore-overseas/foreign-faction = worshippers of anything western).

Confucian saying 知好色則慕少艾 (*zhi1 hao4 se1 ze2 mu4 shao4 ai4* = know-like-color/beauty-thus-adore-young-beautiful = having sexual curiosity/urge, admire pretty girls) explains why teenagers naturally 思慕 (*si1 mu4* = yearn-for-are-fond-of) the opposite sex.

by Diana Yue