

# 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 burning the linked ships

Putonghua pronunciation: *feng1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fung1*

Meanings: wind

風 = wind/breeze: 清風 (*qing1 feng1* = fresh/cool wind/breeze), 風暴 (*feng1 bao4* = wind-violent = storm), 風向 (*feng1 xiang4* = wind's-direction), 風勢 (*feng1 shi4* = wind's-force). 風險 (*feng1 xian3* = wind-danger) = risk.

風平浪靜 (*feng1 ping2 lang4 jing4* = wind-calm-waves-quiet) = calm/uneventful situation. 興風作浪 (*qing1 feng1 zuo2 lang4* = raise-wind-make-waves) describes trouble-makers/gossipers creating 風波 (*feng1 bo1* = wind-wave = disturbance/quarrel) among people.

吳 (*Wu2*) Kingdom's general 周瑜 (*Zhou1 Yu2*) watched 魏 (*Wei4*) Kingdom's fleet. 蜀 (*Shu2*) Kingdom's prime-minister 諸葛亮 (*Zhu1 Ge2 Liang4*) 借東風 (*jie4 dong1 feng1* = borrow-east-wind): performed magic to make 東風 (*dong1 feng1* = east-wind) blow towards Wei's 連環船 (*lian2 huan2 chuan2* = link-ring-ships = chained-together battleships).

by Diana Yue