

# Character Builder 您好嗎? 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 burning the linked ships

燒

Putonghua pronunciation: *shao1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *siu1*

Meanings: burn

燒 (radical 火 *huo3*, fire) = burn/cook: 燒柴 (*shao1 chai2* = burn~firewood), 燒飯 (*shao1 fan4* = cook~rice). Soldiers use 火器 (*huo3 qi4* = fire~instrument = firearms).

吳 (*Wu2*) Kingdom's general 周瑜 (*Zhou1 Yu2*) decided: 用火攻 (*yong4 huo3 gong1* = use~fire~attack) = attack 魏 (*Wei4*) Kingdom's battleships with fire.

Wu archers lit, shot arrows obtained from 孔明借箭 (*Kong3 Ming2 jie4 jian4* = Kong-ming borrowed arrows). 東風 (*dong1 feng1* = east~wind) fanned fire. Wei's 連環船 (*lian2 huan2 chuan2* = linked~chained~ships) 燃燒 (*ran2 shao4* = ignited~burned), 燒燬 (*shao1 hui3* = burn~destroy = were burnt down). Wei's soldiers 燒傷 (*shao1 shang1* = burn~wound = were burnt, injured), 燒死 (*shao1 si3* = burn~die = were burnt to death).