

# 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 old family money

傳

Putonghua pronunciation: *chuan2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chuen4*

Meanings: send, transmit, pass on, bestow, circulate, spread

傳 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 專 *zhuan1*, designated) means bestow/send. King 傳位 (*chuan2 wei4* = bestows/throne) to heir. Court 傳召 (*chuan2 chao4* = sends~summons) witness. Epics describe 傳說 (*chuan2 shuo1* = circulated~talk = stories/legends).

Teacher 傳授 (*chuan2 shou4* = passes-on~teaches) knowledge/skills. Media 傳播 (*chuan2 bo4* = transmit~broadcast) news. 傳真 (*chuan2 zhen1* = transmit~true/real) = facsimile/fax. 訛傳 (*e2 chuan2* = false~circulate) = rumors.

Distinguished family 詩禮傳家 (*shi1 li3 chuan2 jia1* = poetry~rites~pass-on~family = keeps scholastic/refined family tradition). Descendants 遺傳 (*yi2 chuan2* = leave-behind-pass-on = inherit) family traits. 傳家寶 (*chuan2 jia1 bao3* = passed-on~family~treasure) = heirloom. In song/poetry, 龍的傳人 (*long2 de0 chuan2 ren2* = dragon~'s~pass-on~person = dragon's heirs/descendants) means the Chinese race.

by Diana Yue