

# 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 graduation

Putonghua pronunciation: *ye4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yip6*

Meanings: doing, work, cause, employment, profession, achievement, estate

業 means work/engagement/profession: 學業 (*xué2 ye4* = study~work = course of study), 職業 (*zhí2 ye4* = post~profession = job), 事業 (*shì4 ye4* = affairs~work = career). 業餘 (*ye4 yú2* = profession~remain/outside) = amateur.

Graduates 就業 (*jiù4 ye4* = join~work = find employment). Those who have 事業心 (*shì4 ye4 xīn1* = affairs~enterprise-heart = are career-minded) 創業 (*chuàng4 ye4* = create~achievement = establish careers/enterprises) in 農業 (*nóng2 ye4* = farming~professions = agriculture), 工業 (*gōng1 ye4* = work/engineer~professions = industries), acquire 家業 (*jiā1 ye4* = family~estates/fortunes).

In Buddhism, 業 means 因果報應 (*yīn1 guo3 bao4 yīng4* = cause~result~reward~echo = inevitability of cause and effect = karma): 善業 (*shàn4 ye4* = good~works), 惡業 (*è4 ye4* = evil~works).

by Diana Yue