

# Character Builder 您好學? 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 bank accounts

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhàng4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jeung3*

Meaning: account, ledger, sum, credit, debt

賬 (radical 貝 *bei4*, sea-shells/money) means money records: 賬簿 (*zhàng4 bu4* = account-books/ledgers), 賬目 (*zhàng4 mu4* = account-items), 賬款 (*zhàng4 kuan3* = account-item's-amount). Bookkeeper 管賬 (*guan3 zhàng4* = manages/enters/checks-accounts).

Bank's 賬戶 (*zhàng4 hu4* = account-holder) can 賒賬 (*she1 zhàng4* = borrow/lend-credit). Shareholders watch stocks' 賬面 (*zhàng4 mian4* = account-face = book) value. Restaurant patron checks 賬單 (*zhàng4 dan1* = account-sheet = bill), 結賬 (*jie2 zhàng4* = ties/settles-bill), 付賬 (*fu4 zhàng4* = pays/foots-the-bill) plus 小賬 (*xiao3 zhàng4* = small-bill/tip).

記賬 (*ji4 zhàng4* = recording/entering-expenses into personal account) means 欠賬 (*qian4 zhàng4* = owing/carrying-debts), must 清賬 (*qing1 zhàng4* = clear/repay-debts). 算賬 (*suan4 zhàng4* = calculate-account) means view/check accounts or demand/pay/clear/settle debts/scores on day of reckoning.

by Diana Yue