

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:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th 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 comradeship



Putonghua pronunciation: **he2**

Cantonese pronunciation: **hap6**

Meaning: close, combine, unite, join, fit, merge, suitable, together

合 (△ **ji2**, triangle + 口 **kou3**, mouth) means 合上 (**he2 shang4** = close-up), 適合 (**shi1 he2** = suit-fit). Door 張合 (**zhang1 he2** = opens-closes). Wounds 癒合 (**yü4 he2** = heal-mend). 合情 (**he2 qing2** = fit-feeling) = emotionally-understandable/approvable. 合理 (**he2 li3** = fit-reason) = reasonable/justifiable. 合法 (**he2 fa3** = fit-law) = legitimate/lawful.

Lovers 結合 (**jie2 he2** = tie-knot-unite/marry). Partners 合作 (**he2 zuo2** = collaborate-work-together). Factions 合併 (**he2 bing4** = join-combine). Allies 聯合 (**lian2 he2** = join-together). 聯合國 (**lian2 he2 guo2** = link-join-countries) = the United Nations.

Comrades 整合 (**zheng3 he2** = re-assemble-join) forces, 融合 (**ron2g he2** = melt-join = merge) opinions, 合力 (**he2 li4** = unite-strength = work together) to overcome obstacles.

by Diana Yue