

# 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 Chief Executive Election

政

Putonghua pronunciation: *zheng4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jing3*

Meanings: rule, administration, governance

政 means rule/regime. In 君主政制 (*jūn1 zhu3 zheng4 zhi4* = monarch~rule~political~system = monarchy), king heads 政權 (*zheng4 quán2* = rule~power/authority = regime/administration). People praise 仁政 (*ren2 zheng4* = benevolent~ rule). 暴政 (*bao4 zheng4* = despotic~rule) causes 政變 (*zheng4 bian4* = rule~change = coup d'état).

政治 (*zheng4 zhi4* = administration~rule) = politics. 政客 (*zheng4 ke4* = political~guest) = political activists. 政治家 (*zheng4 zhi4 jia1* = politics~rule~master = politicians) publishes 政論 (*zheng4 lun4* = political~commentaries), 政綱 (*zheng4 gang1* = political~principles/program).

政府 (*zheng4 fu3* = rule-house = government) implements 政策 (*zheng4 ce4* = political~plan/strategy = policies). Sage says: 為政不在多言 (*wei2 zheng4 bu4 zai4 duo1 yan2* = administering governance doesn't need too much talking).

by Diana Yue