

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 graduation



Putonghua pronunciation: *wei4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *wai3*

Meanings: console, comfort, feel comforted, glad

慰 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) = verb 安慰 (*an1 wei4* = calm~console = comfort), adjective 欣慰 (*xin1 wei4* = glad~consoled). Visitor 慰問 (*wei4 wen4* = comfort~ask = consoles) hospitalized patient. Praying churchgoer feels God's 撫慰 (*fu3 wei4* = touch~console = consoling touch). Boss throws party to 慰勞 (*wei4 lao2* = console~labor = thank/encourage) prize-winning team.

World denounces Japanese soldiers for using female-prisoners as 慰安婦 (*wei4 an1 fu4* = console~comfort~women = comfort women) in WWII. 自慰 (*zi4 wei4* = self~consolation) also means masturbation.

Nobel-winner's parents 老懷大慰 (*lao3 huai2 da4 wei4* = old~bosoms~big~comfort = wonderfully happy in old age), feel 可告慰於先人 (*ke3 gao4 wei4 yü1 xian1 ren2* = can~tell/bring~comfort~to~predecessors~people = this will please our ancestors).

by Diana Yue