

# 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 Hurricane Sandy



Putonghua pronunciation: *jù4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gui6*

Meanings: huge, giant, enormous, extremely large, great

巨 = 巨大 (*jù4 da4* = huge/gigantic-big): 巨型 (*jù4 xíng2* = enormous~size), 巨量 (*jù4 liang4* = huge~bulk). 巨款 (*jù4 kuan3* = huge~money) = huge amount of money. Myth features 巨人 (*jù4 rén2* = huge-person = giant), 巨龍 (*jù4 long2* = giant-dragon).

巨商 (*jù4 shang1* = giant-businessman) = super-tycoon. 巨富 (*jù4 fu4* = super-rich) = billionaire. Tolstoy, 巨匠 (*jù4 jiang4* = great~master) of literature, wrote 巨著 (*jù4 zhu4* = great~work) *War and Peace*.

巨風 (*jù4 feng1* = huge~winds/gales), 巨浪 (*jù4 lang4* = giant~waves) hit New York shoreline. 巨石 (*jù4 shi2* = huge~rocks/boulders) crash with 巨響 (*jù4 xiang3* = huge~noise). 巨變 (*jù4 bian4* = great~change/catastrophe) generates 艱巨 (*jian1 jù4* = difficult~gigantic) task of rebuilding.