

# 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 the myth of the ten suns

射

Putonghua pronunciation: *she4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *se6*

Meanings: shoot, archery

弓 (*gong1*, bow), 箭 (*jian4*, arrow), 刀 (*dao1*, broad-blade knife), 槍 (*qiang1*, sharp-headed rod), 劍 (*jian4*, sword), 戟 (*ji1*, lance with vertical-horizontal-bladed-head), 矛 (*mao2*, spear), 盾 (*dun4*, shield) are weapons.

后羿 (*Hou4 Yi4* = Hou-yi) 箭無虛發 (*jian4 wu2 xu1 fa1* = arrow-no-empty-release = arrow never misses), 百發百中 (*bai2 fa1 bai2 zhong4* = hundred-releases-hundred-hits = always hits mark), aimed at one sun, 一射中的 (*yi1 she4 zhong4 di2* = one-shoot-hits-mark). Noun 的 (*di4* = 目的 *mu4 di4* = eyes' target/aim/objective).

He 射下 (*she4 xia4* = shot-down) nine suns, 射殺 (*she4 sha1* = shot-killed) harmful snakes/beasts. People hailed him: 神射手! (*shen2 she4 shou3* = god-shoot-hand = godlike/wonderful archer!) Today 射擊 (*she4 ji1* = shoot-attack) means gun/rifle-shooting.

by Diana Yue