

# 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 history

錄

Putonghua pronunciation: *lu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *luk6*

Meanings: record

錄 = 記錄 (*ji4 lu4* = note-down~record) = verb/noun record. History is 文字紀錄 (*wen2 zi4 ji4 lu4* = writing~character~note-down~record = words/written records). VIP publishes 日記 (*ri4 ji4* = day/daily~record = diary), 回憶錄 (*hui2 yi1 lu4* = return~remember~record = memoirs).

School 取錄 (*qu3 lu4* = take~record = admits/enrolls) students. Swimming champ 破紀錄 (*po4 ji4 lu4* = breaks~record). Partners sign 備忘錄 (*bei4 wang4 lu4* = prepare/keep~forget~record = memorandum), record details with 錄音機 (*lu4 yin1 ji1* = record~sound~machine = recording machine), 錄像帶 (*lu4 xiang4 dai4* = record~image~belt/tape = video-tape).

Sinner writes 懺悔錄 (*chan4 hui4 lu4* = remorse~regret~record = confessions). New Testament Bible's 啟示錄 (*qi3 shi4 lu4* = open~show~record) = Book of Revelations.

by Diana Yue