

# 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 Guangdong Province

廣

Putonghua pronunciation: *guang3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gwong2*

Meanings: broad, expansive

廣 means broad: 廣場 (*guang3 chang3* = broad-field = square/plaza), 廣播 (*guang3 bo4* = broad-disperse = broadcast).

Hongkong is in 廣東省 (*Guang3 Dong1 sheng3* = Guangdong-Province), traditionally called 粵 (*Yue4*). Guangdong's 省會 (*sheng3 hui4* = provincial capital) is 廣州 (*Guang3 Zhou1* = Guangzhou), which westerners once called “Canton”. However, adjective “Cantonese” means “of Guangdong Province”.

Guangzhou and Hongkong people speak 粵語 (*Yue4 yu3* = Yue-speech = 廣東話, *Guang3 Dong1 hua4* = Cantonese-dialect), eat 粵菜 (*Yue4 cai4* = Yue-vegetables = Cantonese dishes/cuisine), enjoy 粵劇 (*Yue4 ju2* = Cantonese-opera).

Guangzhou stands on 珠江 (*Zhu1 Jiang1* = Pearl-River), is part of prosperous 珠江三角洲 (*Zhu1 Jiang1 san1 jiao3 zhou1* = Pearl-River-three-angles-island = Pearl River delta).