

# 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 cycling

Putonghua pronunciation: *lun2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lun4*

Meanings: wheel, revolve

輪 has 輪軸 (*lun2 zhu2* = wheel~axle), 輪輻 (*lun2 fu2* = wheel~spokes). 齒輪 (*chi3 lun2* = teeth~wheel = gear wheel) has 輪齒 (*lun2 chi3* = wheel~teeth/cogs). Cripple needs 輪椅 (*lun2 yi3* = wheel~chair). 摩天輪 (*mo1 tian1 lun2* = touch~sky~wheel) = ferris wheel.

Verb 輪 = revolve: 輪流 (*lun2 liu2* = revolve~flow = take turns), 輪班 (*lun2 ban1* = revolve~shift = take shifts). Buddhists believe in 輪迴 (*lun2 hui2* = revolve~return = soul's reincarnation). “輪到你” (*lun2 dao4 ni3* = wheel~reach~you) = “Your turn!”

車輪 (*che1 lun2* = cart/car~wheel) needs 輪胎 (*lun2 tai1* = wheel~“tire”-transliterated). 三輪車 (*san1 lun2 che1* = three~wheel~cart/car) means tricycle. Bicycle is 自行車 (*zi4 xing2 che1* = self-walk/move~cart/car).