

# 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 political parties



Putonghua pronunciation: *yi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yi6*

Meanings: hack, fell, cut down, chop, kill, attack

異 = 不同 (*bu4 tong2* = not~same, dissimilar), 奇異 (*qi2 yi4* = odd~strange). Teenagers fancy 異性 (*yi4 xing4* = opposite~sex). Fickle person 見異思遷 (*jian4 yi4 si1 qian1* = see~another~ponder~change = wants someone/something else).

Unhappy couple 離異 (*li2 yi4* = separate~alienate = divorce). Traitor develops 異心 (*yi4 xin1* = separate~heart = intention of leaving/betrayal). “異鄉人” (*yi4 xiang1 ren2* = different~village/homeland~person) is Chinese title of Camus' L'Etranger.

黨同伐異 (*dang3 tong2 fa2 yi4* = party/ally~same~attack~different) means ganging up with like-minded buddies and persecuting opponents. Dictator hates 異己 (*yi4 ji3* = different~self = those with different views/loyalties), banishes 異見份子 (*yi4 jian4 fen4 zi0* = different~opinion~part~ diminutive = dissidents) to 異國 (*yi4 guo2* = alien~country).

by Diana Yue