

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:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th 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 going to church

禱

Putonghua pronunciation: *dao3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *to2*

Meanings: pray, prayer

禱 = 祈禱 (*qi2 dao3* = beseech~pray) = 禱告 (*dao3 gao4* = pray~tell = pray to deity/God). Buddhists 唸經 (*nian4 jing1* = recite/chant~sutras), 焚香祝禱 (*fen2 xiang1 zhu1 dao3* = burn~incense~bless~pray = offer incense, wishes, prayers).

Catholic 默禱 (*mo4 dao3* = silent~pray = prays silently), fingering 唸珠 (*nian4 zhu1* = recite~beads = rosary). Priest speaking aloud leads congregation in 公禱 (*gong1 dao3* = public~prayers). 代禱 (*dai4 dao3* = represent~pray) = pray on behalf of others, e.g. sinners/patients.

Christians' 主禱文 (*zhu3 dao3 wen2* = master~pray~text = The Lord's Prayer) ends with 阿們 (*a4 men2* = 阿孟 = *a4 meng4* = "amen"-transliterated) i.e. 誠心所願 (*cheng2 xin1 suo3 yuan4* = sincere~heart~'s~wish = genuinely from my heart).

by Diana Yue