

# 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 Bodhisattva Guanyin

Putonghua pronunciation: *qiu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kau4*

Meanings: need, request, demand, beseech, beg, seek

求 implies need/modesty/despair: 請求 (*qing3 qiu2* = please~beg = request), 要求 (*yao1 qiu2* = want~beg = demand), 訴求 (*su4 qiu2* = appeal~beg = plea). 求救 (*qiu2 jiu4* = beg~save) = send SOS. 哀求 (*ai1 qiu2* = plaintively/depserately~begs), 求恕 (*qiu2 shu4* = begs~forgiveness), 求情 (*qiu2 qing2* = beg~feeling = begs for understanding/pardon).

Self-sufficient economy 不假外求 (*bu4 jia3 wai4 qiu2* = no~delegate~external~seek = doesn't need external supply/back-up). 無欲無求 (*wu2 yu4 wu2 qiu2* = without~desire~without~ need) describes modest/passive/un-ambitious mindset/life-style.

Temple-goers 求神拜佛 (*qiu2 shen2 bai4 fo2* = beg~gods~worship~Buddha = worship, make offerings to deities), 求福 (*qiu2 fu2* = pray-for~blessings), believe Bodhisattva Guanyin 有求必應 (*you3 qiu2 bi4 ying4* = has~requests~definitely~reply = grants all prayer-requests).

by Diana Yue