

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 job-hunting

Putonghua pronunciation: *qiú2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kau3*

Meanings: beg, request, entreat, seek, pursue, search, need, desire, demand

求 = verb 請求 (*qing3 qiú2* = request/beg), noun 需求 (*xū1 qiú2* = need-demand). 供過於求 (*gong1 guo4 yü1 qiú2* = supply-exceeds-demand). Students 求學 (*qiú2 xüe2* = pursue~studies), later 求職 (*qiú2 zhi2* = seek~employment/jobs).

Shipwreck victims 求救 (*qiú2 jiu4* = seek~save = send SOS).

Temple-goers 求神拜佛 (*qiú2 shen2 bai4 fo2* = beg~gods-worship-Buddha = worship deities, ask for blessings).

Social climber 追求 (*zui1 qiú2* = pursue~seek = pursues) fame/fortune. Lover 求愛 (*qiú2 ai4* = beg~love = woos) girl, 求歡 (*qiú2 huan1* = beg~pleasure = wants sex).

To implore, say “求求你!” (*qiú2 qiú2 ni3* = beg~beg~you!) Sage advises: 無欲無求 (*wu2 yü4 wu2 qiú2* = no~desire-no~longings = lustless) is best.