

# Character Builder

# 您好學? 呀

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 adultery

Putonghua pronunciation: **zong4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **jung3**

Meanings: send, deliver, loosen, free, over-indulge

縱 (radical 系 = 絲 **xil**, thread/silk) means loosen/free. 縱身一跳 (**zong4 shen1 yi1 tiao4** = free-body-one-leap) describes person's leaping/plunging action. Rider 縱馬奔馳 (**zong4 ma3 ben1 chi2** = lets-horse-run-gallop = gives horse free rein). 縱火 (**zong4 huo3** = free-fire) = arson. Adverb 縱然 (**zong4 ran2** = free-yes) means "although/despite".

Parents 縱容 (**zong4 rong2** = free-allow = give too much freedom to) kid. Kid is 縱壞 (free-bad = spoil).

放縱 (**fang4 zong4** = send-loosen) means indulgence: 縱酒 (**zong4 jiu3** = indulge-in-wine/liquor), 縱慾 (**zong4 yu4** = indulge-in-lust). Playboy 縱情酒色 (**zong4 qing2 jiu3 se1** = indulges-in-wine-and-women), 縱情享樂 (**zong4 qing2 xiang3 le4** = free-love-enjoy-pleasures = eat drink and be merry) is gist of Epicureanism.

by Diana Yue