

# 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 plans and timetables

表

Putonghua pronunciation: *biao3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *biu2*

Meaning: outer, surface, list, table, chart, form, gauge, record

表 (毛 *mao2*, hair/fur + 衣 *yi1*, clothes) = surface: 表情 (*biao3 qing2* = surface-feelings = expression), 表現 (*biao3 xian4* = surface-appear = show/perform).

表 means gauge/record: 寒暑表 (*han2 shu3 biao3* = cold-hot-gauge = thermometer), also means data list/chart: shop's 價目表 (*jia4 mu4 biao3* = price-item-list = price-list), institution's 編制表 (*bian1 zhi4 biao3* = arrange-system-list = establishment list), play/film's 演員表 (*yan3 yuan2 biao3* = act-ors-cast), school/plan's 時間表 (*shi2 jian1 biao3* = time-period-list = timetable/time-chart).

表格 (*biao3 ge2* = list-squares) = form: 申請表 (*shen1 qing3 biao3* = request-ask-form = application form), 報稅表 (*bao4 shui4 biao3* = report-taxes-form = tax return form), 表列 (*biao3 lie4* = form-list) means presenting data in list/table/chart.

by Diana Yue