

# 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 World Cup matches



Putonghua pronunciation: *zu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *juk1*

Meanings: foot

足 = 腳 (*jiao3*, foot). 手足 (*shou3 zu2* = hand~foot) also means brothers/buddies. In 1911 China banned 纏足 (*chan2 zu2* = bind~foot = foot-binding). Today women have 天足 (*tian1 zu2* = nature-born~feet = unbound feet), not 小腳 (*xiao2 jiao3* = small~feet = bound feet).

足球隊 (*zu2 qiu2 dui4* = foot~ball~team)'s 教練 (*jiao4 lian4* = teach~practice = coach) trains 球員 (*qiu2 yuan2* = ball~member = players) to 踢球 (*ti1 qiu2* = kick/control~ball): 傳 (*chuan2*, pass-ball), 盤 (*pan2*, revolve-ball = tackle), 頂 (*ding3*, top/head-ball = do headers), 射 (*she4*, shoot), 射十二碼 (*she4 shi2 er4 ma3* = shoot-ten~two=12-yards = shoot penalty kick).

Pele, Maradona are 足球明星 (*zu2 qiu2 ming2 xing1* = foot~ball~bright~star = soccer stars).