

# 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 salads

果

Putonghua pronunciation: *guo3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gwoh2*

Meanings: fruit, result

果 = 田 (*tian2*, field) + 木 (*mu4*, wood/tree/plant). Farmers harvest 果實 (*guo3 shi2* = fruit~solid = fruit/grains). 果樹 (*guo3 shu4* = fruit-trees) in 果園 (*guo3 yüan2* = fruit~gardens/orchards) yield 橘子 (*jü2 zi0* = oranges), 葡萄 (*pu2 tao2* = vines/grapes).

To make 水果沙拉 (*shui3 guo3 sha1 la1* = water~fruit~"salad"-transliterated = fruit salad), take 蘋果 (*ping2 guo3* = apple~fruit = apples), 菠蘿 (*bo1 luo2* = pineapples), 西瓜 (*xi1 gua1* = west-melon = watermelons), peel 果皮 (*guo3 pi2* = fruit~skin), remove 果核 (*guo3 he2* = fruit~nucleus = stones/seeds), 切塊 (*qie4 kuai4* = cut-into~pieces/strips), mix with 白酒 (*bai2 jiu3* = white~wine). 果然好吃! (*guo3 ran2 hao3 chi4* = fruit/result~certainly~good~eat = As expected/indeed, it's delicious!)

by Diana Yue