

# 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 winter clothes

藏

Putonghua pronunciation: *cang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chong4*

Meanings: hide, store, collect, keep, hoard, storage

藏 (radical 艹 = 草 *cao3*, grass) = collect/hoard. Squirrels 貯藏 (*zhu4 cang2* = hoard~store) nuts for winter. Spy 藏身 (*cang2 shen1* = hide~body = hides) in secret spot.

金屋藏嬌 (*jin1 wu1 cang2 jiao1* = gold~house~hide~beauty) describes rich man keeping mistress.

Each family has 家藏 (*jia1 cang2* = family~collection = heirloom). Jewelry/artworks are 珍藏 (*zhen1 cang2* = precious~store = valuable collections).

冬衣 (*dong1 yi1* = winter~clothes) need 洗熨 (*xi3 tang4* = washing-ironing), 乾洗 (*gan1 xi3* = dry~cleaning), 收藏 (*shou1 cang2* = collect-hide = putting away). Storing 棉 (*mian2*, cottons), 麻 (*ma2*, linens), 絲 (*si1*, silks), 毛 (*mao2*, woolens) needs 防潮劑 (*fang2 chao2 ji4* = prevent~humid-agent = anti-blushing agent), 樟腦丸 (*zhang1 nao4 wan2* = camphor~balls).

by Diana Yue