

# 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 job-hunting

職

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jik1*

Meanings: post, job, position, office, duty

職 (radical 耳 *er3*, ear) implies hearing/obeying orders. 職業 (*zhi1 ye4* = post-trade) = profession/occupation. 職員 (*zhi1 yüan2* = staff-members = 職工 *zhi1 gong1* = working-employees) hold 職稱 (*zhi1 cheng1* = job-titles), perform 職責 (*zhi1 ze2* = working-responsibilities). 升職 (*sheng1 zhi1* = ascend-post) = promotion. 降職 (*jiang4 zhi1* = descend-post) = demotion.

Graduate 求職 (*qiu2 zhi1* = looks-for-job), gets 職位 (*zhi1 wei4* = post-position), 盡職 (*jin4 zhi1* = exhaust-post = perform duties thoroughly/diligently), never 失職 (*shi1 zhi1* = neglects/mishandles-duties). Neck pain is computer worker's 職業病 (*zhi1 ye4 bing4* = occupational-disease).

Soldier's 天職 (*tian1 zhi1* = heaven-post = natural/born duty) is defending country. 殉職 (*xun1 zhi1* = die-for-post) means getting killed on account of work/duty.

by Diana Yue