

# 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 reporters

偽

Putonghua pronunciation: *wei3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ngai6*

Meanings: false, fake, untrue, pretended, forged, illegitimate

偽 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, human + 為 *wei2*, do/make) means artificial/unauthentic. 虛偽 (*xū1 wei4* = empty~false) = insincere. Crooks launder 偽鈔 (*wei4 chao1* = forged-banknotes). Tabloids 偽造新聞 (*wei4 zao4 xin1 wen2* = false~make~new~hear = invents news-stories).

Spy uses 偽造護照 (*wei4 zao4 hu4 zhao4* = false~make~protect~photo = faked passport) for 偽裝 (*wei4 zhuang1* = false~wear = disguise/camouflage). In WWII China, 偽政府 (*wei4 zheng4 fu3* = false~administrative~building = illegitimate/unrecognized collaborative government) worked for 敵偽 (*di2 wei4* = enemy~illegitimate = Japanese enemy).

偽善 (*wei4 shan4* = false/pretend~kind = hypocrisy) is repelling. Rather than 偽君子 (*wei4 jūn1 zi0* = false~honorable-man = hypocrites), I prefer 真小人 (*zhen1 xiao3 ren2* = true~small~person = frankly/openly bad guys).

by Diana Yue