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:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th 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 foreign maids

待 [dai4]
Putonghua pronunciation: dai4
Cantonese pronunciation: dai6
Meanings: wait, wait on, attend, tend to, treat, treatment

待 (radical Chi, as in テ chu4 = walking slowly and pausing) means 等待 (deng3 dai4 = wait-waiting); 久待 (jiu3 dai4 = long-awaiting), 苦待 (ku3 dai4 = miserably-waiting), 不待 (bu4 da4 = won’t-wait, will act). 待業 (dai4 ye4 = waiting-for-employment) = unemployed.

Hotel staff 款待 (kuan3 dai4 = sincerely/friendly-wait-on = receives/attends to) guests, demonstrate 待客之道 (dai4 ke4 zhi1 dao4 = receive/treat-guests-'s-way = rules/ways of showing hospitality), won’t 冷待 (leng3 dai4 = coldly-treat = neglect) anyone. Well-bred person 待人接物 (dai4 ren2 jie2 wu4 = treats-people-handles-things/situations) sensibly.

待遇 (dai4 yu4 = treatment-reception) = employee’s remunerations package. 厚待 (hou4 dai4 = thick-treat) = good/generous pay/treatment. 薄待 (bo2 dai4 = thin-treat) = bad/stingy pay/treatment.

by Diana Yue