Character Builder 您好嗎？水

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 furniture

Table

Putonghua pronunciation: chuo1
Cantonese pronunciation: cheuk3
Meaning: table, desk

桌 (radical 木 mu4, wood) = 桌子 (zhuo1 zio = table-diminutive) = table: 飯桌 (fan4 zhuo1 = eat/dining- table), 書桌 (shu1 zhuo1 = book-table = writing desk), 桌布 (zhuo1 bu4 = table-cloth).

Tiffany makes beautiful 桌燈 (zhuo1 deng1 = table/desk-lamps).

八仙桌 (ba1 xian1 zhuo1 = eight-immortals-table) is 方桌 (fang1 zhuo1 = square-table) allowing eight diners 同桌 (tong2 zhuo1 = same/sharing-table). Academics/politicians hold 圓桌會議 (yuan2 zhuo1 hui4 yi4 = round-table-discussions). British universities keep 高桌晚餐 (gao1 zhuo1 wan3 can1 = high-table-evening-dinner) tradition.

Gamblers at 賭桌 (du3 zhuo1 = gambling-table) show cards/stakes on 桌面上 (zhuo1 mian4 shang1 = table-surface-on = on the table). Angry loser 拍桌子 (pai1 zhuo1 zio = bang-the-table).

by Diana Yue