Character Builder 您好嗎 仄

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 quarrelling

Putonghua pronunciation: chao3
Cantonese pronunciation: chaau2
Meanings: noisy, noise, clamour, quarrel, row, squabble, bickering

吵 (radical 口 kou3, mouth) describes 嘈吵 (cao2 chao3 = clamorous/irritating-noisy) sounds. Music/traffic 太吵 (tai4 chao3 = is too-noisy/loud!) Kids 吵嚷 (chao3 rang4 = yell-shout noisily). Dad complains: 吵死了 (chao3 si3 le0 = noisy-to-death = this noise is killing me!)

吵架 (chao3 jia4 = quarrel-fight) = row. Couple 鬥嘴 (dou4 zui3 = compete/fight-mouts = engage in war of words), 爭吵 (zeng1 chao3 = dispute/argue-quarrel). Mother-in-law 勸架 (qüan4 jia4 = dissuade-quarrel/fight = tries pacifying quarrel/fight): 別吵嘴了! (bie2 chao3 zui3 le0 = don't-quarrel-mouth~ed = Stop squabbling!)

Congress 吵吵鬧鬧 (chao3 chao3 nao4 nao4 = quarrel-quarrel-noise-noise = keep quarrelling/bickering), 越吵越兇 (yüe4 chao3 yüe4 xiong1 = more-quarrel-more-fierce = quarrel gets fiercer and fiercer).

by Diana Yue