Character Builder 您好嗎？伙

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 lovers

吻

Putonghua pronunciation: wen3
Cantonese pronunciation: man5
Meanings: proboscis, mouth, kiss

Animal’s 吻部 (wen3 bu4 = mouth/lips/jaws-part) = proboscis. Storyteller uses lively 口吻 (kou3 wen3 = mouth-proboscis = speech/narrative tone). Judge accepts evidence that 吻合 (wen3 he2 = lips-join = match). 虎吻 (hu3 wen3 = tiger’s-mouth/jaws) = extremely dangerous situation.

接吻 (jie1 wen3 = connect-kiss) = kissing. 輕吻 (qing1 wen3 = light-kiss = lightly-touching kiss), 熱吻 (re2 wen3 = hot-kiss = kiss violently), 濕吻 (shi1 wen3 = wet-kiss = French kiss). Father asks little daughter: “給爸爸一個吻!” (gei2 ba4 ba0 yi1 g4 wen3 = give-pa-pa-one-unit-kiss = “Give Daddy a kiss!”)

吻別 (wen3 bie2 = kiss-depart) = kiss someone goodbye. Starlet拋飛吻 (pao1 fei1 wen3 = throw-fly-kiss = blows/throws kisses) at fans.

by Diana Yue