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 quantitative easing

借 Putonghua pronunciation: jie4
Cantonese pronunciation: je3
Meanings: borrow, lend

借 (radical 亻 = ren2, human/person) = borrow/lend: 借錢 (jie4 qian2 = lend/borrow-money), 借用 (jie4 yong4 = borrow-use) = borrow another’s belongings for use. 借口 (jie4 kou3 = borrow-mouth) = pretext.

捐助 (jie4 zhu4 = borrow-help/aid) = conveniently utilize.
Schemer 借刀殺人 (jie4 dao1 sha1 ren2 = borrow-knife-kill-person = manipulates another to harm/destroy his enemy).
Financial guru 借殼上市 (jie4 ke2 shang4 shi4 = borrow-shell-go-on-market = uses shell/front company for business’s IPO).

During QE3 banks 借出 (jie4 chu1 = lend-out) money.
Businesses/mortgagees 借機 (jie4 ji1 = seize-chance) 借貸 (jie4 dai4 = borrow-loans). Banks/creditors hold 借據 (jie4 jü4 = borrowing-notes = IOUs) but fear 借債不還 (jie4 zhai4 bu4 huan2 = borrow-debts-no-return/repay = debt default).

by Diana Yue