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 pipe organs

管
Putonghua pronunciation: guan3
Cantonese pronunciation: goon2
Meanings: pipe, tube, reed, canal, duct, woodwind instrument

管 (radical 竹 zhu2, bamboo) means tubular pipe/object: 竹管 (zhu2 guan3 = bamboo-tube/pipeline), 血管 (xue3 guan3 = blood-tube/vessels), 水管 (shui3 guan3 = water-pipes), 油管 (you2 guan3 = oil-pipelines), 褲管 (ku4 guan3 = trouser-leg).

管道畅通 (guan3 dao4 chang4 tong1 = pipe-passage-ease-through) describes smooth-flowing traffic/activities. 雙管齊下 (shuang1 guan3 qi2 xia4 = pair-pipes-together-down) = exerting parallel effort. 一管簫 (yi1 guan3 xiao1 = a-[tube-of]- flue) = a flute/reed. 管弦樂 (guan3 xian2 yue4 = reeds-strings- music) means orchestral music.

風琴師 (feng1 qin2 shi1 = wind-musical-instrument-master = organist) plays on 鍵盤 (jian4 pan2 = key-boards), steps on 腳鍵盤 (jiao3 jian4 pan2 = pedal-key-board). Long and short 風琴管 (feng1 qin2 guan3 = organ pipes) produce sounds.

by Diana Yue