

# 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:

1<sup>st</sup> tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2<sup>nd</sup> tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3<sup>rd</sup> tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4<sup>th</sup> 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 World Expo

館

Putonghua pronunciation: *guan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *goon2*

Meanings: house, building, pavilion

館 (radical 食 *shi2*, eat/food) has eating/living/special facilities. 旅館 (*lü2 guan3* = travel~house) = inn/hostel. 醫館 (*yi1 guan3* = doctor~house) = traditional Chinese medical clinic. 使館 (*shi4 guan2* = envoy~building) = embassy/consulate. 吃館子 (*chi1 guan3 zi0* = eat~restaurant~diminutive) = eat at restaurant.

博物館 (*bo2 wu4 guan3* = broad~things~building = museums), 美術館 (*mei3 shu4 guan3* = beauty~method~building = art galleries), 圖書館 (*tu2 shu1 guan3* = picture~book~building = libraries) have 館藏 (*guan3 cang2* = building~hold/hoard = collections).

World Expo's 展覽館 (*zhan3 lan3 guan3* = show~see~building = exhibition pavilions) display 展品 (*zhan3 pin3* = exhibit~objects/items = exhibits): 文物 (*wen2 wu4* = writing/culture~objects = cultural relics), 新發明 (*xin1 fa1 ming2* = new~develop~enlighten = new inventions).

by Diana Yue