

# 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 Chinese New Year lucky money

紅

Putonghua pronunciation: *hong2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hung4*

Meanings: red, sanguine, prosperous

紅, vibrant/fiery/feverish color, symbolizes happiness/luck/prosperity. 紅日 (*hong2 ri4* = red~sun), 血紅 (*xue3 hong2* = blood~red), 紅腫 (*hong2 zhong3* = red~swollen) wound, 火紅 (*huo3 hong2* = fire~red = raging) trend. 紅光滿面 (*hong2 guang1 man3 mian4* = red-light~full~face) = reddish/robust countenance.

紅軍 (*hong2 jun1* = Red~Army) guards 紅色政權 (*hong2 se1 zheng4 quan2* = red-colour~political-power = Communist regime). Pop-group 走紅 (*zou3 hong2* = run~red = shoots into stardom), premiere gets 滿堂紅 (*man3 tang2 hong2* = full~hall~red = full-house and cheers).

Bride wears 紅褂 (*hong2 gua4* = red~Chinese-jacket). 紅燈籠 (*hong2 deng1 long2* = red~lamp~cage = red lanterns) decorate wedding hall. 十丈紅塵 (*shi2 zhang4 hong2 chen2* = ten~yards-high~red~dust) = gaily-lit world of vanity.

by Diana Yue