

# 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 more animal stories

狼

Putonghua pronunciation: *lang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *long4*

Meanings: wolf

狼群 (*lang2 qun1* = wolf-crowd = pack of wolves) is savage/fierce. On night of full moon 狼嗥 (*lang2 hao2* = wolf's-howling) suggests 狼入 (*lang2 ren2* = wolf~human = werewolf) is around. 狼圖騰 (*lang2 tu2 teng2* = wolf~totem) is worshipped in Mongolia.

色狼 (*se1 lang2* = color/~wolf) = men who harass/molest women. 狼吞虎咽 (*lang2 tun1 hu3 yan4* = wolf~swallow~tiger~swallow) describes people eating hungrily/greedily. 豺狼當道 (*cai2 lang2 dang1 dao4* = small-wolf~wolf~astride~road) = bad/cruel people are in power.

披著羊皮的狼 (*pi1 zhao2 yang2 pi2 de0 lang2* = covered~with~sheep~skin~s~wolf = wolf in sheep's clothing) is dangerous. Shepherd boy who calls “狼來了!” (*lang2 lai2 le0* = wolf~comed = “Wolf!”) too many times loses credibility.

by Diana Yue