

# 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 wheat-planting

Putonghua pronunciation: *cang1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chong1*

Meanings: barn, shed, warehouse

Character 倉 shows roof-top (人) over door (户) over opening (口). 倉 = 倉庫 (*cang1 ku4* = barn~storehouse). 物流管理 (*wu4 liu2 guan2 li3* = things~flow~control~handle = logistics management) requires 貨倉 (*huo4 cang1* = goods~barn = warehouses) for 倉儲 (*cang1 chu3* = storehouse~keep = warehousing). Inhabitant of small apartment rents 迷你倉 (*mi2 ni3 cang1* = “mini”-transliterated~warehouse).

米 (*mi3*, rice), 麥 (*mai4*, wheat) are 糧 (*liang2* = 米 *mi3*, rice + 量 *liang4*, quantity = grain~staples), stored in 糧倉 (*liang2 cang1* = grains~barns). 天下糧倉 (*tian1 xia4 liang2 cang1* = sky~below~grains~barn) means country’s leading grain-producing region.

Idiom 積穀防饑 (*ji1 gu3 fang2 ji1* = amass~rice~prevent~hunger/famine) advises saving up food/assets for needy times.