

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 feeding of the five thousand



Putonghua pronunciation: e4

Cantonese pronunciation: ngoh6

Meanings: hungry, starve, famished, starve someone, yearning for

餓 has radical 食 (*shi2*, eat/food). 我餓了! (*wo3 e4 le0* = I-hungry-ed) = I'm hungry! 餓壞了! (*e4 huai4 le0* = hungry-bad-ed) = I'm starved! 餓 + synonym 饑 (*ji1*) = adjective/noun 饑餓 (*ji1 e4* = hungry/hunger). 饑民 (*ji1 min2* = starving~people = famine victims) 餓死 (*e4 si3* = starve-to-death). 捱饑抵餓 (*ai2 ji1 di3 e4* = suffering~hunger~resisting~hunger) = persisting without food.

餓鬼 (*e4 gui3* = hungry~ghost) = person keen/dying to devour/enjoy food. Beggar 餓飯 (*e4 fan4* = hungry-for-cooked-rice = lack/want food). 餓虎擒羊 (*e4 hu3 qin2 yang2* = hungry-tiger-capturing-lamb) describes predator attacking, overpowering prey.

Crowd following Jesus 餓肚皮 (*e4 du4 pi2* = starve~stomach-skin = went on hungry stomach) to hear him preach.