

# 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 New Year resolutions

新

Putonghua pronunciation: *xin1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *san1*

Meanings: new, fresh

新 follows 舊 (*jiu4*, old). In 新年 (*xin1 nian2* = New-Year) we 棄舊迎新 (*qi4 jiu4 ying2 xin1* = abandon-old~welcome~new = ring out the old, ring in the new), see 舊雨新知 (*jiu4 yu3 xin1 zhi1* = old~rain~new~know = old friends, new acquaintances).

Society needs 新血 (*xin1 xue3* = new~blood). New shops 新張 (*xin1 zhang1* = newly~open). New appointees 履新 (*lü3 xin1* = shoe/step-into~new = newly assume office). 新人 (*xin1 ren2* = new~people = wedding couple) enter 新房 (*xin1 fang2* = new/bridal~chamber).

Sinner 改過自新 (*gai3 guo4 zi4 xin1* = change~fault~self~new = reforms himself), 從新做人 (*cong2 xin1 zuo4 ren2* = from~new~do~person = starts a new life), rejoices in 新生 (*xin1 sheng1* = new~life).