

# 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 fishing

放

Putonghua pronunciation: *fang 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fong 2*

Meanings: release

In recreational fishing, angler enjoys 寧靜 (*ning2 jing4* = peace-and-quiet), develops 耐心 (*nai4 xin1* = endurance-heart = patience), love of 大自然 (*da4 zi4 ran2* = big-naturally-so = Mother Nature). Fish caught are 放回水中 (*fang4 hui2 shui3 zhong1* = released~back~water-inside = returned to the water).

放 means relaxing, releasing: 放鬆 (*fang4 song1* = open-up~relax), 放下重擔 (*fang4 xia4 xiong4 dan4* = put~down~heavy~weight = relieved of burden), 放心 (*fang4 xin1* = relax~heart = feel relieved). Shepherds 放羊 (*fang4 yang2* = let-roam~sheep/ goats), falconers 放鷹 (*fang4 ying1* = let-fly~eagle = train hawks).

Buddhists practice 放生 (*fang4 sheng1* = release-life = releasing captured animals back into the wild) to 積德 (*ji1 de2* = collect/hoard~virtue/merit = improve good deeds record).

by Diana Yue