

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 stupid search



Putonghua pronunciation: *qiu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kau4*

Meanings: beg, seek, search, ask for favor, need, desire, demand

求 = 乞求 (*qi1 qiu2* = beg~ask), 哀求 (*ai1 qiu2* = sorrowfully/desperately~beg). 求婚 (*qiu2 hun1* = ask~marriage) = marriage proposal. Students 求教 (*qiu2 jiao4* = ask-for~teacher's advice). Patients 求醫 (*qiu2 yi1* = seek~medical-cure). Hot goods 供不應求 (*gong1 bu4 ying4 qiu2* = supply~no~nod/satisfy~demand = supply lags behind demand).

Temple-goers 求財 (*qiu2 cai2* = ask-deity-to-bestow~wealth), 求子 (*qiu2 zi3* = beg~son = ask-deity-to-bestow~son). 忍辱求存 (*ren3 ru4 qiu2 cun2* = tolerate~humiliation~seek~survive) = swallow insult to be spared. “求求你!” (*qiu2 qiu2 ni3* = beg~beg-you) = “Please!”

Partners 求同存異 (*qiu2 tong2 cun2 yi4* = seek~similarity~preserve~differences = collaborate despite differences). Martyr 求仁得仁 (*qiu2 ren2 de2 ren2* = seek~benevolence/sacrifice~obtain~benevolence/sacrifice = sacrifices life willingly).

by Diana Yue