

# 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 Chinese national anthem

進

Putonghua pronunciation: *jin4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jun3*

Meanings: roar, howl, thunder, bellow, yell

進 (radical 辵 = 走, *chuo4*, run) = advance/progress. 進來 (*jin4 lai2* = advance~come) = Come in! 進行 (*jin4 xing2* = proceed~walk) = proceed. 進退兩難 (*jin4 tui4 liang3 nan2* = advance~retreat~both~difficult) = trapped in awkward situation.

進口 (*jin4 kou3* = enter~mouth/port) = import. 進步 (*jin4 bu4* = advance~step) means progress/improve or ideologically progressive. French national anthem 馬賽曲 (*Ma3 Sai4 Qü3* = “Marseille”-transliterated~song = La Marseillaise) is 進行曲 (*jin4 xing2 qü3* = advance~walk~tune/song = march) accompanying revolutionaries’ 進攻 (*jin4 gong1* = forward-offensive = attack).

Chinese national anthem 義勇軍進行曲 (*yi4 yong3 jun1 jin4 xing2 qü3* = righteous~brave~army~advance~walk~tune = March of the Volunteer Troops) rallies revolutionaries: 前進 (*qian2 jin4* = forward~advance = proceed/march)!

by Diana Yue