

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 Halloween

扮

Putonghua pronunciation: *ban4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *baan6*

Meanings: dress up, feign, pretend, disguise, impersonate

扮 (扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand + 分 *fen1*, separate) means impersonate/feign. Women 打扮 (*da3 ban4* = hit/~make-up = wear make-up/jewelry). Actors/actresses 扮演 (*ban4 yan3* = feign-play/act) different roles. 化妝派對 (*hua4 zhuang1 pai4 dui4* = transform~make-up~"party"-transliterated = costume party)-goers appear in different扮相 (*ban4 xiang4* = make-up/dress~appearance = specially-designed looks).

Emperor 扮老百姓 (*ban4 lao3 bai3 xing4* = feign-old~hundred-surnames = disguises himself as commoner), 微服出巡 (*wei1 fu2 chu1 xun2* = tiny/lowly~dress-go-out~inspect = tours/inspects places dressed/disguised as commoner).

Clown 扮鬼臉 (*ban4 gui3 lian3* = pretend-ghost~face = makes grimaces/funny faces). At Halloween kids 扮鬼 (*ban4 gui3* = pretend-ghost = wear ghosts/spooks' outfits), 扮女巫 (*ban4 nü3 wu2* = pretend~women~medium/witch = wear witches' dress/make-up).