

# 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 passive waiting

懶

Putonghua pronunciation: *lan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *laan5*

Meanings: lazy, negligent, languid, listless, passive, sluggish

懶 = 亻 (= 心 *xin1*, heart) + 賴 (*lai4*, laze): 懶惰 (*lan3 duo4* = lazy~inert/slothful), 懶人 (*lan3 ren2* = lazy~person), 懶散 (*lan3 san3* = lazy~disorganized/undisciplined). 躲懶 (*duo3 lan3* = hide~lazy) = sneak away from work/duties.

Feeling 懶洋洋 (*lan3 yang2 yang2* = lazy~overflow~overflow = languid), we 伸懶腰 (*shen1 lan3 yao1* = stretch~lazy~waist = stretch), 打呵欠 (*da3 he1 qian4* = make~“he~qian”-sound = yawn). 懶蟲 (*lan3 chong2* = lazy~worm/bug), 懶鬼 (*lan3 gui3* = lazy~ghost) mean “Lazybone!”

懶得去 (*lan3 de2 qu4* = lazy~get~go-to) = too lazy/tired/indisposed to do something: 懶得去管 (*lan3 de2 qu4 guan3* = wouldn't bother to interfere), 懶得去想 (*lan3 de2 qu4 xiang3* = wouldn't even bother to think about it).