

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 working



Putonghua pronunciation: *gan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gon3*

Meanings: do, work, fuck, kill

幹 (radical干 *gan1*, pole/spear) means do/work: 幹活 (*gan4 huo2* = do-work-for~livelihood), 幹事 (*gan4 shi4* = do/execute~tasks), 幹部 (*gan4 bu4* = work-member) = executive/cadre/ganbu. 能幹 (*neng2 gan4* = can~do/work) = able/competent. 硬幹 (*ying4 gan4* = stiff-do) = pursue something obstinately/inflexibly.

Antagonists 對著幹 (*dui4 zhe0 gan4* = face-ing-do) = challenge/obstruct each other. Employee 日幹夜幹 (*ri4 gan4 ye4 gan4* = day~work~night~work = works non-stop), finally 不幹了 (*bu4 gan4 le0* = no~work~-ed = quits). 幹嘛 (*gan4 ma2* = do-interrogative) = What's up/Why?

幹那回事 (*gan4 nei4 hui2 shi4* = do~that~round-of-thing) means sex-act. 幹了她 (*gan4 le0 ta1* = do~done~her) = fucked her. However, “幹掉她!” (*gan4 diao4 ta1* = do-away/finish-her) means “Kill her!”