

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 removing obstacles

趕

Putonghua pronunciation: *gan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gon2*

Meaning: drive, rush, hurry, chase, drive away, catch up, speed up

趕 (radical 走 *zou3*, walk/run) means hurry/drive/chase: 趕緊 (*gan3 jin3* = hurry-urgent = hastily), 趕快 (*gan3 kuai4* = "Hurry-up-quick!"), 不趕 (*bu4 gan3* = "No-hurry!") Farmers 趕集 (*gan3 ji2* = hurry-to-market/fair). Shepherd 趕羊 (*gan3 yang2* = drives-sheep), 趕走 (*gan3 zou3* = chases-away) wolf.

Busybody 趕來趕去 (*gan3 lai2 gan3 qu4* = hurry-come-hurry-go = rushes around). Police 趕到 (*gan3 dao4* = speedily-arrives) scene of rioting, 驅趕 (*qu1 gan3* = drive-chase/hurry = drives off) mobsters.

Team 趕工 (*gan3 gong1* = speeds-up-work), 趕上 (*gan3 shang4* = meets/catches-up with) deadline. Enterprises 你追我趕 (*ni3 zui1 wo3 gan3* = you-chase-I-rush = compete fiercely).

Monopolies 趕盡殺絕 (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2* = chase-exhaust-kill-extinct = chase/kill off) small businesses.

by Diana Yue