

# 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 fox borrowwng tiger's majesty

假

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga2*

Meanings: untrue, false, imaginary, imitation, borrow, use, assume

假 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 假 *jia3*, borrowed) = 虛假 (*xu1 jia3* = unreal~false): 假名 (*jia3 ming2* = false~name/pseudonym), 假話 (*jia3 hua4* = false~words = lies), 假設 (*jia3 she4* = false~establish = assumption/hypothesis), 假仁假義 (*jia3 ren2 jia3 yi4* = false~kind~false~righteous = hypocrisy).

Crook 假扮 (*jia3 ban4* = falsely~pretends-to-be) jeweller, sells 假貨 (*jia3 huo4* = faked~goods/items). Fools 真假不分 (*zhen1 jia3 bu4 fen1* = real~false~no~distinguish = can't tell truth from falsehood).

If budget control 假手於人 (*jia3 shou3 yu1 ren2* = borrow/lend~hand-to~others = is delegated to others), cheats can 假借 (*jia3 jie4* = dishonestly~borrow/use) false pretexts to 假公濟私 (*jia3 gong1 ji4 si1* = borrow~official~benefit~private = spend public money/resources on themselves).