

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 senile dementia

Putonghua pronunciation: **wang4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **mong4**

Meaning: forget, oblivious

忘 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) means 忘記 (**wang4 ji4** = forget-to-remember = forget), 忘卻 (**wang4 que4** = forget-decline = deliberately forget). Genius 過目不忘 (**guo4 mu4 bu4 wang4** = pass-eyes-no-forget = remembers everything read/seen). Dementia patient 善忘 (**shan4 wang4** = good-at-forgetting = is forgetful).

Ungrateful person 忘本 (**wang4 ben3** = forget-origin = disowns roots/benefactors). Artist/rescuer enjoys 忘我 (**wang4 wo3** = forget-me/ego = selfless) work/mission. 毋忘我 (**wu4 wang4 wo3** = don't-forget-me) is forget-me-not, a flower.

Old love 難以忘懷 (**nan2 yi3 wang4 huai2** = is-difficult-to-forget-from-bosom/heart). But sage says: 太上忘情 (**Tai4 Shang4 wang4 qing2** = Ultimate-Supreme-forget-feelings = enlightened people put away feelings). 忘掉他/她! (**wang4 diao4 tai** = forget-drop-him/her = Forget him/her!)

by Diana Yue