

Character Builder

您好學? 好

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 vacation and retirement

懶

Putonghua pronunciation: *lan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *laan5*

Meaning: lazy, laze, indolent, negligent, languid, sluggish

懶 (radical 亻 = 心 *xin1*, heart + 賴 *lai4*, procrastinate) means 懶惰 (*lan3 duo4* = lazy-inert/slothful). 樹懶 (*shu4 lan3* = sloths) inhabit trees, look 懶洋洋 (*lan3 yang2 yang2* = lazy-overflow-overflow = languid), 伸懶腰 (*shen1 lan3 yao1* = stretch-lazy-waist/body), 睡懶覺 (*shui4 lan3 jiao4* = sleep-lazy-sleep = take naps), 懶蟲 (*lan3 chong2* = lazy-worm/bug = lazybone) 躲懶 (*duo3 lan3* = hide-lazy = sneaks away from work/duties), Welfare support sometimes 養懶人 (*yang3 lan3 ren2* = breed-lazy-people = make people 懶散 *lan3 san3* = lazy/inert-disorganized/undisciplined).

懶人 (*lan3 ren2* = lazy-person) 做慣乞丐懶做官 (*zuo4 guan4 qi3 gai4 lan3 zuo4 guan1* = is-accustomed-beggar-lazy-be-bureaucrat = prefers poor man's relaxed life to rich prestigious man's busy working-life).

by Diana Yue