

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 resting



Putonghua pronunciation: *xi1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sik1*

Meanings: stop, rest, cease, breath

息 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) means 休息 (*xiu1 xi1* = stop-rest = take a rest). Jogger reaches kiosk, 歇息 (*xie1 xi1* = pauses~rests), 喘息 (*chuan3 xi1* = pant~breath = pants, seizes chance to rest/recover). 小息 (*xiao3 xi1* = little~rest) = short break for coffee/siesta.

Adjudicator 平息 (*ping2 xi1* = press-down~stop = pacifies) quarrel: “Let’s 息事寧人 (*xi1 shi4 ning2 ren2* = subdue~affair~ pacify~people = resolve issue, end dispute peacefully)”. Compensated person 息怒 (*xi1 nu4* = stop~angry = anger subsides).

樹欲靜而風不息 (*shu4 yu4 jing4 er2 feng1 bu4 xi1* = tree~desires~quiet~but~wind~won’t~stop) describes children mourning parents’ passing. Pastor blesses deceased: 主懷安息 (*zhu3 huai2 an1 xi1* = master~bosom~peaceful~rest = Rest in the arms of the Lord).