

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 golden week

假

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga3*

Meanings: leave, holiday, vacation

假 (*jia4*) means leave/vacation: 假日 (*jia4 ri4* = vacation~day = holiday), 有薪假期 (*you3 xin1 jia4 qi1* = have~firewood/wage~holiday~period) = paid leave. 放假 (*fang4 jia4* = release~vacation) = take leave. 告假 (*gao4 jia4* = inform/appeal~vacation) = apply for leave. 銷假上班 (*xiao1 jia4 shang4 ban1* = annul-leave~go-on~shift) = end leave, resume work.

病假 (*bing4 jia4* = ill~vacation = sick leave) is 淒涼 (*qi1 liang2* = pitiful-cool = sad). 蜜月假期 (*mi4 yue4 jia4 qi1* = honey-moon~vacation~period = honeymoon vacation) is 浪漫 (*lang4 man4* = wave~ooze = “roman” tic-transliterated = romantic).

巴黎 (*ba1 li2* = “Paris”-transliterated), 杭州 (*hang2 zhou1* = Hangzhou) are 度假勝地 (*du4 jia4 sheng4 di4* = pass~vacation~win-land/spot = nice places for holidaying).

by Diana Yue