

# 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:

- 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 sheep and goats

趕

Putonghua pronunciation: *gan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gon2*

Meaning: chase, pursue, hurry, rush, drive away, catch up, speed up

趕 (radical 走 *zou3*, walk/run) means hurry/drive/chase. Busy person 趕時間 (*gan3 shi2 jian1* = races-against-time). Car 趕上 (*gan3 shang4* = rush-on = catches up with) and 趕過 (*gan3 guo4* = rush-pass = overtakes) bicycle.

Cowboy 驅趕 (*qu1 gan3* = drive-chase/hurry = drives) cattle. Shepherd 趕羊 (*gan3 yang2* = drives/herds-sheep), 趕走 (*gan3 zou3* = chases-away) wolf. Farmer 趕集 (*gan3 ji2* = hurries-to-market/fair).

Factory 趕工 (*gan3 gong1* = speeds-up-work), 趕起 (*gan3 qi3* = rushes-out-completes) quota. Migrants 趕回家 (*gan3 hui2 jia1* = hurry-return-home = hurry home) for holidays. Enterprises 你追我趕 (*ni3 zui1 wo3 gan3* = you-chase-I-rush = compete fiercely). Monopolies 趕盡殺絕 (*gan3 jin4 sha1 jue2* = chase-exhaust-kill-extinct = squeeze out, kill off) small businesses.

by Diana Yue