

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 feeling miserable

煩

Putonghua pronunciation: *fan2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faan4*

Meanings: annoyance, irritation, worry, vexation

煩 = 火 (*huo3*, fire) + 頁 (*ye4* = 頭 *tou2*, head), means headache/annoyance. 煩事 (*fan2 shi4* = troublesome/unpleasant~matters) make us 心煩意亂 (*xin1 fan2 yi4 luan4* = heart~worry~ideas~confused = worried/disturbed). 煩死了! (*fan2 si3 le0* = annoy~dead~end) = It's so troublesome/annoying!

麻煩 (*ma2 fan2* = confuse~annoy) = trouble. Thugs 找他麻煩 (*zhao2 ta1 ma2 fan2* = find~him~trouble) = give him trouble. 麻煩你 (*ma2 fan2 ni3* = trouble~you) = "Please help to..."

煩惱 (*fan2 nao3* = vexed-unhappy) = worries. "少年維特的煩惱" (*shao4 nian2 wei2 te4 de0 fan2 nao3* = young~years~"Werther"~transliterated~'s~vexed-unhappy) is Chinese title of Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther. Poet laments life's endless 煩憂 (*fan2 you1* = vexation~worry = anxieties).

by Diana Yue