

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 partying

歡

Putonghua pronunciation: *huan 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *foon 1*

Meanings: joy, cheer, sexual intercourse

Verb 喜歡 (*xi3 huan1* = like~joy) = like/love someone/something. 歡樂 (*huan1 le4* = joy~cheer/happiness) makes people 歡笑 (*huan1 xiao4* = happily~laugh). Crowds 歡呼 (*huan1 hu1* = joyously~shout/cheer) to 歡迎 (*huan1 ying2* = cheer~welcome) homecoming troops. 交歡 (*jiao1 huan1* = cross~joy) means sexual intercourse, 求歡 (*qiu2 huan1* = beg~fun/sex) means ask for sex. Tibetan Buddhism icon 歡喜佛 (*huan1 xi3 fo2* = joy~cheer~Buddha) shows male and female mating. Men frequent 歡場 (*huan1 chang3* = fun/entertainment~places) to 尋歡 (*xun2 huan1* = find/buy~fun/sex).

Solo diner/drinker 獨酌無歡 (*du2 zhuo2 wu2 huan1* = lonely~drinking~lacking~fun/joy), 鬱鬱寡歡 (*yu4 yu4 gua3 huan1* = dense~dense~few/lacking~joy = looks/feels sad/cheerless/ out-of-place). 不歡而散 (*bu4 huan1 er2 san4* = dis~pleased~so~disperse) describes quarreled partners' party's breaking-up.

by Diana Yue