

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 leisure

趕

Putonghua pronunciation: *gan3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gon2*

Meanings: hurry, rush, drive, chase

趕 (radical 走 *zou3*, run) means hurry/rush: 趕來 (*gan3 lai2* = rush-over~here), 趕去 (*gan3 qu4* = rush-over~there), 趕到 (*gan3 dao4* = rush/hurriedly~arrive). 趕緊 (*gan3 jin3* = rush~tight) = hurrying/“Quick”!

趕 also means drive/chase/speed up. Shepherd 趕羊 (*gan3 yang2* = drive~sheep = herds sheep), 趕走 (*gan2 zou3* = drive-run = chases away) wolves. Cop 追趕 (*zui1 gan3* = pursues~ chases) thief. Smart late-starter 趕上 (*gan3 shang4* = rush~on = catches up with) and 趕過 (*gan3 guo4* = rush~pass = overtakes) others.

Workers/writers 趕工 (*gan3 gong1* = speeds-up~work), 趕稿 (*gan3 gao3* = rush~manuscript = speed up writing) to 趕起 (*gan3 qi3* = rush~build/complete) project. Busy people always 趕時間 (*gan3 shi2 jian1* = chase~time~dimension = are in a hurry).

by Diana Yue