

# 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:

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 false hopes

假

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga2*

Meanings: false, unreal, pseudo, deceptive

假 = 虛假 (*xü1 jia3* = empty~false/deceptive): 假貨 (*jia3 huo4* = fake~goods), 假髮 (*jia3 fa3* = false-hair = wig), 假名 (*jia3 ming2* = pseudo~nym). 假如 (*jia3 ru2* = false~resemble) = if. 假設 (*jia3 she4* = false~set-up) = assumption/hypothesis. 假想敵 (*jia3 xiang3 di2* = false~think~enemy) = imagined enemy/target.

Crooks 說假話 (*shuo1 jia3 hua4* = say~false~words = lie), 弄虛作假 (*nong4 xü1 zuo4 jia3* = play-with~empty~make~false = fabricate falsehood). Hypocrites 假情假義 (*jia3 qing2 jia3 yi4* = false~feeling~false~righteousness = feign sympathy/devotion).

弄假成真 (*nong4 jia3 cheng2 zhen1* = play-with~false~become~real) describes pretense/hoax turning into real/irreversible situation. 望梅止渴 (*wang4 mei2 zhi3 ke3* = look-at~plum~stop~thirst) means taking consolation from 假象 (*jia3 xiang4* = false~picture).

by Diana Yue