

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:

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 change of weather

加

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gal*

Meaning: add, plus, increase

加 (力 *li4*, strength + 口 *kou3*, mouth) = add/increase: 加上 (*jia1 shang4* = add-on/also/plus), 加速 (*jia1 su4* = increase/accelerate speed), 加租 (*jia1 zu1* = raise-rent), 加價 (*jia1 jia4* = raise-prices), 加油 (*jia1 you2* = add-petrol/fill-up tank or "Step it up!"), 加盟 (*jia1 meng2* = join-alliance/group/team).

東盟十加三 (*dong1 meng2 shi2 jia1 san1* = east-alliance-ten-plus-three) = ASEAN Plus Three = Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China, Japan, South Korea. 加鹽加醋 (*jia1 yan2 jia1 cu4* = add-salt-add-vinegar) describes cook marinating meat 加入 (*jia1 ru4* = adding/mixing-in) condiments, or gossiping exaggerating story.

In temperature-drop, 加衣 (*jia1 yi1* = add/wear-more-clothes), 加被 (*jia1 bei4* = add-blankets), 加餐 (*jia1 can1* = add-meal = eat more).