

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 bachelors and spinsters

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gap1*

Meanings: urgent, impatient, hurry, hurried, abrupt, hasty

急 describes urgent/impatient/abrupt situations/feelings/actions: 性急 (*xing4 ji2* = character-hurry = impatient) person, 緊急 (*jin3 ji2* = tight-urgent = urgent/serious) situation. 便急 (*bian4 ji2* = faeces/excrete~urgent) = needs to shit rightaway, 尿急 (*niao4 ji2* = urine-urgent) = needs to pee rightaway. 急速 (*ji2 su1* = quick-speed = hurrying/fast). 急病 (*ji2 bing4* = urgent~illness) needs 急救 (*ji2 jiu4* = urgent~save = emergency treatment). Market 急劇 (*ji2 ju2* = abrupt~dramatic) crashes. Investor 著急 (*zhao4 ji2* = touch~impatience = gets alarmed), 急忙 (*ji2 mang2* = hurry~busy = hastily) sells stocks.

Spinster is 心急 (*xin1 ji2* = heart-urgent = impatient) to marry, but her date doesn't want to 操之過急 (*cao1 zhi1 guo4 ji2* = handle~it~too~hurriedly = go ahead too quickly/hastily).