

Character Builder 您好嗎? 快

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 feeling good

快

Putonghua pronunciation: *kuai4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *faai3*

Meanings: quick, sharp, direct, pleasurable, cheer

快 = quick/fast/sharp: 快速 (*kuai4 su1* = fast~speed), 快刀 (*kuai4 dao1* = sharp~knife). 爽快 (*shuang3 kuai4* = non-sticky-quick/frank) person 快人快語 (*kuai4 ren2 kuai4 yü3* = straightforward-person~straightforward~words = does not mince words).

快 = soothing pleasure: 涼快 (*liang2 kuai4* = cool~pleasant), 快樂 (*kuai4 le4* = pleasure-joy/happiness), 不快 (*bu4 kuai4* = no-happy = dismay). 快活 (*kuai4 huo2* = pleasure-live) describes cheerful/non-worrying/gay attitude/life-style.

快 = enjoyable/elation. 吃個痛快 (*chi1 ge4 tong4 kuai4* = eat~a-pain~enjoy) = eat to heart's content. Winning Wimbledon championship is 一生快事 (*yi1 sheng1 kuai4 shi4* = one-life~pleasant-event = joy of a life-time). Taking luxury cruise -- 不亦快哉! (*bu4 yi4 kuai4 zai1* = no~also~pleasure~ah) = Doesn't that make you feel wonderful?

by Diana Yue