

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 cosmetic surgery

假

Putonghua pronunciation: *jia3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ga2*

Meaning: pretend, imagined, false, fake, sham, bogus, feigned, untrue, lend

假 (radical 亻 = 人 *ren2*, person) means pretend/false: 假裝 (*jia3 zhuang1* = false-attire = pretend), 假設 (*jia3 she4* = pretend-assume = hypothesis), 假定 (*jia3 ding4* = pretend-sure = assuming), 假如 (*jia3 ru2* = pretending-if). 假 pronounced “*jia4*” means leave/vacation.

假想敵 (*jia3 xiang3 di2* = pretend-think-enemy) = assumed enemy. 假手於人 (*jia3 shou3 yu1 ren2* = lend/give-hand-to-another) describes lazybone/schemer letting another person work/kill for him. 假面 (*jia3 mian4* = false-face) = mask/persona in ball/drama.

Some men 真假不分 (*zhen1 jia3 bu4 fen1* = true-false-no-distinguish = can't tell real/truth from false/falsehood), think women with 假髮 (*jia3 fa3* = false-hair = wig), 假牙 (*jia1 yia2* = false-teeth), 假胸 (*jia3 xiong1* = false-breasts/boobs) are genuine beauties.

by Diana Yue