

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 acting

扮

Putonghua pronunciation: *ban4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *baan6*

Meanings: make-up, pretend, act a part, impersonate

扮 (radical 扌 = 手, *shou3*, hand) = 裝 (*zhuang1*, dress/pretend): 裝死 (*zhuang1 si3* = pretend-to-be-dead), 扮窮 (*ban4 qiong2* = pretend-to-be-poor). Women love 打扮 (*da3 ban4* = hit/make-make-up = wearing cosmetics/jewelry/dresses): 淡妝 (*dan4 zhuang1* = light-make-up) for day-time, 濃妝 (*nong2 zhuang1* = rich/heavy-make-up) for parties.

Actors/stars 扮演 (*ban4 yan3* = make-up~act = play/act) different roles, have different 扮相 (*ban4 xiang4* = make-up/dress~ appearance = carefully-designed looks). In traditional Chinese opera, male actors 男扮女裝 (*nan2 ban4 nu3 zhuang1* = man~ pretend~woman~dress = dress as women) to play female roles. Clowns 扮鬼臉 (*ban4 gui3 lian3* = pretend~ghost~face = make funny faces).

Cheats 扮豬食老虎 (*ban4 zhu1 chi1 lao2 hu3* = pretend~pig~eat~old~tiger = play dumb to exploit others).

by Diana Yue