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, 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 vacation and retirement

Putonghua pronunciation: lan3
Cantonese pronunciation: laan5
Meaning: lazy, laze, indolent, negligent, languid, sluggis

懒 (radical 心 xin1, heart + 赖 lai4, procrastinate) means 懒 (lan3 duo4 = lazy-inert/slothful). 懒惰 (lan3 lan3 = sloths) inhabit trees, look 懶洋洋 (lan3 yang2 yang2 = lazy-overflow; overflow = languid), 伸懶腰 (shen1 lan3 yao1 = stretch-lazy-waist/body), 睡懶覺 (shui4 lan3 jiao4 = sleep-lazy-sleep = take naps).

懒 (lan3 chong2 = lazy-worm/bug = lazybone) 躲懒 (duo3 lan3 = hide-lazy = sneaks away from work/duties), Welfare support sometimes 養懶人 (yang3 lan3 ren2 = breed-lazy-people = make people 懶散 lan3 san3 = lazy/inert-disorganized/undisciplined).

懒人 (lan3 ren2 = lazy-person) 做慣乞丐懶做官 (zuo4 guan4 qi3 gai4 lan3 zuo4 guan1 = is-accustomed-beggar-lazy-be-bureaucrat = prefers poor man's relaxed life to rich prestigious man's busy working-life).

by Diana Yue