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 cosmetic surgery

假 Putonghua pronunciation: jia3  Cantonese pronunciation: ga2
Meaning: pretend, imagined, false, fake, sham, bogus, feigned, untrue, lend

假 (radical 人 ren2, person) means pretend/false: 假装 (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.

假怨敵 (jia3 xiang3 di2 = pretend-think-enemy) = assumed enemy. 假手於人 (jia3 shou3 yu1 ren2 = lend/give-hand-to-another) describes lazybone/schmeer 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