

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 golden week

休

Putonghua pronunciation: *xiu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yaui1*

Meanings: cease, stop, rest

休 shows 亻 (= 人 *ren2*, person) resting against 木 (*mu4*, wood/tree). 休止 (*xiu1 zhi3* = rest~stop) = cease. 休息 (*xiu1 xi1* = rest~stop) = rest.

Invalid needs 休養 (*xiu1 yang3* = rest~nourish = rest/recuperation). War-devastated country needs 休養生息 (*xiu1 yang3 sheng1 xi1* = rest~nourish~grow~benefit = rest/redevelopment/growth). 休假 (*xiu1 jia4* = rest-holiday) = take leave/vacation. 退休 (*tui4 xiu1* = retreat~rest) = retirement.

Husband dislikes wife's 喋喋不休 (*die2 die2 bu4 xiu1* = chat~chat~no~stop = endless nagging), mentions 休妻 (*xiu1 qi1* = stop~wife = annul wife). Wife 不肯罷休 (*bu4 keng3 ba4 xiu1* = no~willing~cease~stop = won't give in/up), shouts “你休想!” (*ni3 xiu1 xiang3* = you~stop~think = “Don't dare you think about it!”