

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 feeling good

歡

Putonghua pronunciation: *huan1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *foon1*

Meanings: joy, fondness

歡 = 歡樂 (*huan1 le4* = joy~happiness). Friends 歡聚 (*huan1 jü4* = happy~gather = get together), 歡迎 (*huan1 ying2* = joyfully~welcome) newcomers, 歡呼 (*huan1 hu1* = joyfully~shout/cheer), 歡笑 (*huan1 xiao4* = joyfully~laugh). Next table's loner 鬱鬱不歡 (*yü4 yü4 bu4 huan1* = melancholy~melancholy-no~cheer = feels cheerless/low).

Employers 喜歡 (*xi3 huan1* = pleasure~joy = like/favor/prefer) hardworking employees. Lazybone who 失歡於 (*shi1 huan1 yü1* = loses~fondness/favor~with) boss gets sacked.

歡喜 (*huan1 xi3* = joy~mirth) = pleasure/joy. 歡好 (*huan1 hao3* = joy~good/union) = sexual intercourse. 一夕歡愉 (*yi1 xi2 huan1 yü2* = one~evening~joy~pleasure) = one night of pleasurable sex. 歡喜佛 (*huan1 xi3 fo2* = joy~pleasure~buddha) is Buddhist icon showing male and female figures copulating.

by Diana Yue