

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 medication effects

昏

Putonghua pronunciation: *hun1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *fan1*

Meanings: dim, dusk, murky, muddled, confused, senseless, faint

昏 (日 *ri4*, sun/day below 氏 *yi4*, horizon) means dark/blurred/senseless: 黃昏 (*huang2 hun1* = yellow~dim = evening/dusk), 昏暗 (*hun1 an4* = dim~dark), 昏亂 (*hun1 luan4* = unclear/confused-disorderly). 昏黃 (*hun1 huang2* = dusky~yellowish) describes dim lights, yellowed photographs. Combatants fight 天昏地暗 (*tian1 hun1 di4 an4* = sky~darken~land~dim = violently, clouding sky).

Grandpa is 老眼昏花 (*lao3 yan3 hun1 hua1* = old~eyes~dim~blurred = dim-sighted with old age). 昏君 (*hun1 jun1* = brainless/immoral-ruler) likes 昏庸 (*hun1 yong1* = brainless~mediocre/stupid) ministers.

昏死 (*hun1 si3* = faint~die) means drop unconscious. Drugged person 昏倒 (*hun1 dao3* = faints/swoons~collapses), 昏迷 (*hun1 mi2* = faint~mesmerized = falls into a stupor/coma), awakes feeling 頭昏腦脹 (*tou2 hun1 nao3 zhang4* = head~dense/murky~brain~bursting).