

Character Builder 您好學嗎?

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 body-checks



Putonghua pronunciation: *yan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yim6*

Meaning: check, examine, test, inspect, prove to be effective

驗 (radical 馬 *ma3*, horse) means 試驗 (*shi4 yan4* = try/explore-experiment), 實驗 (*shi2 yan4* = practical-experiment), 測驗 (*ce1 yan4* = test-examination). Scientists 驗證 (*yan4 zheng4* = check-to-verify) facts. Believers say oracle's prophesy 靈驗 (*ling2 yan4* = spirit-verify = is accurate, will come true).

Optometrists 驗眼 (*yan4 yan3* = check-eyes = perform eye-checks). Accident victim 驗傷 (*yan4 shang1* = is-checked-for-injuries). 驗屍 (*yan4 shi1* = examine-corpse) = autopsy.

化驗室 (*hua4 yan4 shi4* = chemical-examination/experiment-room = scientific laboratories) 驗血 (*yan4 xue3* = check-blood samples), 驗尿 (*yan4 niao4* = check-urine), 驗膽固醇 (*yan4 dan3 gu4 chun2* = check-bile-solid-alcohol = check cholesterol).

Cancer patient takes 檢驗 (*jian3 yan4* = examinations-checks), accepts 考驗 (*kao3 yan4* = test-check = trials/ordeals).

by Diana Yue