

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 accidents

Putonghua pronunciation: *yan 4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yim 6*

Meanings: urgent, check, examine

In 實驗室 (*shi2 yan4 shi4* = solid/practice-check/examine-room = laboratories) lab technicians 做實驗 (*zuo4 shi2 yan4* = do/work solid/practice-check/examine = do experiments).

Accident victim's 傷勢 (*shang1 shi4* = injury~condition) needs 檢驗 (*jian3 yan4* = pick-up~examine = examination): 體檢 (*ti2 jian3* = body-check-up), 驗血 (*yan4 xue4* = check-blood = blood tests), 驗眼 (*yan4 yan3* = check-eyes), 驗腦 (*yan4 nao3* = check-brain = brain-check).

X光 (= 艾克斯射線 = *ai4 ke1 si1 she4 xian4* = "X"-transliterated-radiate-ray = X-ray) examination shows 骨折 (*gu3 zhe2* = bone-break = bone fracture) in injured limbs. Surgeons perform 切除 (*qie1 chu2* = cut-remove = amputation) or 斷肢再植 (*duan4 zhi1 zai4 zhi2* = broken/severed~limb~again/re~plant = replantation of severed limb).