

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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: *duan4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *duen6*

Meaning: split, break, cut, separate, determine, judge, decide

斷 (radical 斤 *jin1*, catty) means split/cut/sever: 砍斷 (*kan3 duan4* = chop-sever), 斷開 (*duan4 kai1* = break-apart). Toddlers 斷乳 (*duan4 ru3* = stop-milk = are weaned from breastfeeding). 斷肢再植 (*duan4 zhi1 zai4 zhi2* = severed-limb-again-planted) = limb transplant.

Mobs 不斷 (*bu4 duan4* = non-stop) riot, 斷絕 (*duan4 jue2* = cut-off-completely) city's supplies. 優遊寡斷 (*you1 you2 gua3 duan4* = comfortably-leisurely-lacking-decisiveness = indecisive) ruler wrongly 判斷 (*pan4 duan4* = assessed-judged) situation, went to 斷頭台 (*duan4 tou2 tai2* = sever-head-stage = guillotine).

Doctor 斷症 (*duan4 zheng4* = judge-illness = makes diagnosis), 斷定 (*duan4 ding4* = judges-determines) patient has tumor, 斷言 (*duan4 yan2* = firmly-says/declares) it's malignant. Patient 果斷 (*guo3 duan4* = bravely/firmly-decisively) accepts operation.

by Diana Yue