

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

賠

(radical 貝 *bei2* = seashell = money)

Putonghua pronunciation: *pei 2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *pooi 4*

Meanings: repay, reimburse

賠 means offer money/apologies for offence committed. 賠禮 (*pei2 li3* = repay~obeisance) = bow penitently. “向你賠不是!” (*xiang4 ni3 pei2 bu4 shi4* = to~you~repay~not~right) means “Sorry, I was wrong!” 賠不起錢 (*pei2 bu4 qi3 qian2* = repay~not~up~money) means cannot afford amount of reparation/compensation demanded.

買保險 (*mai3 bao2 xian3* = buy~protect~danger/risk) = buy insurance. 旅行保險 (*lu3 xing2 bao2 xian3* = travel~walk~insurance = travel insurance) buyers who suffered 損失 (*sun3 shi1* = hurt~loss = losses) receive 賠償 (*pei2 chang2* = repay~reimbursement = damages).

Unsuccessful businessmen 賠本 (*pei2 ben3* = repay~principal/capital = lose investment capital). China paid 庚子賠款 (*Geng1 Zi3 pei2 kuan3* = Geng-zi-year~repay~money = Boxer Uprising Indemnity) to foreign invaders in 1901.