

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 blind groping

瞎

Putonghua pronunciation: *xia1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hat6*

Meanings: blind

Radical 目 (*mu4*, eye) in characters indicates eyesight: 眼 (*yan3*, eye), 看 (*kan4*, see/look/watch). 瞎 (*xia1*, blind) = 目 (*mu4*, eye) + 害 (*hai4*, harm). 瞎's synonym 盲 (*mang2*, blind) = 亡 (*wang2*, die/dead) + 目 (*mu4*, eye).

瞎子 (*xia1 zi0* = blind~son/person = 盲人 *mang2 ren2* = blind-people) learn/use 盲文 (*mang2 wen2* = blind-writing = Braille). Uninformed people 瞎猜 (*xia1 cai1* = blindly~guess). Liars 瞎說 (*xia1 shuo1* = blind~say = bluff). 瞎眼 (*xia1 yan3* = blind-eyed) = 盲目 (*mang2 mu4* = blind-eyed) = blind/insensitive to reality. Ignorant worshippers 盲從 (*mang2 cong2* = blindly~follow/obey) leader.

Rioters 盲動 (*mang2 dong4* = blind-move = act blindly/ impulsively). 盲流 (*mang2 liu2* = blind-flow) = random/restless/uncontrollable movement of masses seeking short-term livelihood.