

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 senile dementia



Putonghua pronunciation: *lou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *lau6*

Meaning: seep, drip, leak, spillage, omit, miss, skip

漏 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means drip/leak/omit: 漏水 (*lou4 shui3* = leaking-water), 漏電 (*lou4 dian4* = leaking-electricity), Roof 漏雨 (*lou4 yu3* = leaks-when-raining), workman 補漏 (*bu3 lou4* = mends/repairs-leaking-places). 漏光 (*lou4 guang1* = leak-light/empty) means leaking light or totally leaked away. 銅壺滴漏 (*tong2 hu2 di1 lou4* = brass/copper-pot-drip-leak) = clypsidra, ancient Persian/Chinese water-clock. 漏洞 (*lou4 dong4* = leaking-hole) also means loophole. Bad argument 錯漏百出 (*cuo4 lou4 bai3 chu1* = wrong-omit-hundred-out = is full of shaky/wrong points and loopholes/omissions).

漏網之魚 (*lou4 wang3 zhi1 yu2* = leak-net-'s'-fish) means escaped fish or person who avoided mass arrest. Dementia patient 漏帶 (*lou4 dai4* = forgets-to-bring) ID-card, 遺漏 (*yi2 lou4* = lose-omit = forgets/loses) umbrellas/keys.

by Diana Yue