

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 the myth of mending the sky

補

Putonghua pronunciation: *bu3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bo2*

Meanings: mend, replenish, patch up, fill vacated position

補 (radical 衣 *yi1*, clothes) = mend/replenish: budget's 補助 (*bu3 zhu4* = mend-aid = additional funding), speaker's 補充 (*bu3 chong1* = mend-fill = additional explanation), maltreated person's 補償 (*bu3 chang2* = mend-repay = compensation), army's 補給 (*bu3 gei3* = mend-give = replenishments), salary-man's 補薪 (*bu3 xin1* = mend-salary = back-pay), first choice's 後補 (*hou4 bu3* = behind-replace = reserve).

Vitamins can 補身 (*bu3 shen1* = mend/strengthen~body). Weak students need 補習 (*bu3 xi2* = additional-practice/tuition).

After sky's collapse, like seamstress mending torn coat with 補丁 (*bu3 ding1* = mend~point = patching), goddess 女媧 (*Nu3 Wa1* = Nu-wa) 補救 (*bu3 jiu4* = mended/rescued) the situation, 煉石 (*lian4 shi2* = burnt/refined~stones) 補青天 (*bu3 qing1 tian1* = mended/patched-up~blue~sky).