

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 Ebola

Putonghua pronunciation: **zhi4**

Cantonese pronunciation: **ji6**

Meaning: cure, heal, manage, govern, control, curb, order, rule

治 (radical 冫 = 水 **shui3**, water) means treat/control: 治水 (**zhi4 shui3** = control/harness-water/floods), 治家 (**zhi4 jia1** = manage-family-budget/affairs), 治國 (**zhi4 guo2** = rule- country), 治安 (**zhi4 an1** = control-security/peace = law and order) is police's responsibility.

Doctors 治病 (**zhi4 bing4** = treat-illnesses), prescribe 放射線療法 (**fang4 she4 xian4 liao2 fa3** = release-shoot-rays-heal-method = radiation therapy), 化學療法 (**hua4 xue2 liao2 fa3** = chemistry-study-heal-method = chemotherapy) to 根治 (**gen1 zhi4** = fundamentally/thoroughly cure) cancer patients. Some 治癒 (**zhi4 yu4** = heal-cure = are completely cured), some 不治 (**bu4 zhi4** = not-cured = die).

上醫治未病 (**shang4 yi1 zhi4 wei4 bing4** = top/best-doctor-treat-not-yet-ill = prevention is the best cure) is ancient Chinese medical wisdom.

by Diana Yue