

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 disabled people

跛

Putonghua pronunciation: *bo3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *boh3*

Meanings: crippled

Man has 四肢 (*si4 zhi1* = four~limbs). 跛 (*radical足 zhu2* = foot) describes crippled person/limb. 殘廢 (*can2 fei4* = mangled/maimed~invalidated = disabled) describes 癱子 (*tan1 zi0* = paralyzed~son = paralytic), 跛子 (*bo3 zi0* = 瘸子 *que2 qi0* = cripple), person lacking 臂 (*bi4*, arm), 腿 (*tui3*, leg), 手 (*shou3*, hand), 掌 (*zhang3*, palm), 足 (*zhu2* = 腳 *jiao3* = foot).

Accident victim undergoes 麻醉 (*ma2 zui4* = numb~drunken = anesthesia), 斷肢再植 (*duan4 zhi1 zai4 zhi2* = broken~limb~again~plant = limb re-attachment/re-plant). After 截肢 (*jie2 zhi1* = sever~limb = limb amputation), patient gets 義肢 (*yi4 zhi1* = adopted~limb = artificial limb).

Powerful opposition batters 跛腳鴨 (*bo3 jiao3 ya1* = lame~leg~duck = lame duck) government.

by Diana Yue