

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



Putonghua pronunciation: *dai1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *daai1, ngoi4*

Meanings: dumb, stuck, slow-wittee, idiotic, mentally retarded

呆 describes 呆笨 (*dai1 ben4* = slow-witted~stupid) people, 呆板 (*dai1 ban3* = slow/dumb~board = stiff) behavior, 呆滯 (*dai1 zhi4* = stuck~sluggish = slow) progress.

Shocked person 呆住 (*dai1 zhu4* = stuck~still = is stunned stiff). Daydreamer 發呆 (*fa1 dai1* = develop~dumb = stays dumb). 呆若木雞 (*dai1 ruo4 mu4 ji1* = dumb-like~wooden~cock) describes expressionless/dumbfounded person. 呆帳 (*dai1 zhang4* = dumb~debt) = bad debts.

呆子 (*dai1 zi0* = dumb-witted~son/person) is 智障 (*zhi4 zhang4* = intelligence-blocked = cognitively impaired). 老年痴呆症 (*lao3 nian2 chi1 dai1 zheng4* = old-year/age~fixated~dumb~illness) = senile dementia (Alzheimer's disease). 針灸 (*zhen1 jiu3* = needle~mugwort-burn = acupuncture and moxibustion) can stimulate disabled people's 血氣運行 (*xue3 qi4 yun4 xing2* = blood~breath/energy~move~circulation).

by Diana Yue