

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 hungry stomach

Putonghua pronunciation: *wei4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *wai6*

Meaning: stomach

胃 (田 *tian2*, farm-plot + 月 = 肉 *rou4*, flesh/meat, i.e. grain-receiving body organ) means 胃囊 (*wei4 nang2* = stomach-pouch): 胃納 (*wei4 na4* = stomach-intake-volume), 腸胃 (*chang2 wei4* = intestines-stomach = digestive system), 胃酸 (*wei4 suan1* = stomach's-sour/acid) = 胃液 (*wei4 ye4* = stomach's/gastric/digestive-fluid/juice).

胃藥 (*wei4 yao4* = stomach-medicine) treats 胃病 (*wei4 bing4* = stomach-illness), 胃潰瘍 (*wei4 kui4 yang2* = stomach-collapse/rot-ulcer = stomach ulcer), 胃癌 (*wei4 ai2* = stomach-cancer) cause 胃痛 (*wei4 teng3* = stomach-aches/pains).

Hungry person 好胃口 (*hao3 wei4 kou3* = good-stomach-mouth = has good appetite), Greedy haggler 胃口大 (*wei4 kou3 da4* = appetite-big = wants a lot), 令人反胃 (*ling4 ren2 fan3 wei4* = cause-people-reverse/revolt-stomach = is revolting/disgusting).

by Diana Yue