

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 surgical operations

開

Putonghua pronunciation: *kai1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hoi1*

Meaning: open, unfold, apart, ajar, start, off, reveal

開 (radical 門 *men2*, door + separating hands) means 打開 (*da3 kai1* = break/rip-open/apart), 開始 (*kai1 shi3* = open-start): 開門 (*kai1 men2* = open-the-door), 開口 (*kai1 kou3* = open-mouth), 走開 (*zou3 kai1* = walk-off/away), 拉開 (*la1 kai1* = pull/draw-open/apart) curtains, 分開 (*fang4 kai1* = release/loosen-off) grip,

Doctors 開會 (*kai1 hui4* = start/hold-meetings), 開方 (*kai1 fang1* = show/make-prescriptions), Surgeon 開刀 (*kai1 dao1* = open/wield-knife/scalpel = performs operation), 開腦 (*kai1 nao3* = cuts-open-brain), 割開 (*ge1 kai1* = cuts-open) cranium, 切開 (*qie4 kai1* = slices-open) tissues,

Roses 開花 (*kai1 hua1* = open/unfold-flower = bloom), gardener 開心 (*kai1 xin1* = open-heart = feels happy/cheerful), 開飯了! (*kai1 fan4 le0* = open-rice-ed) = "Lunch/dinner is served!"

by Diana Yue