

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 abusive language

壞

Putonghua pronunciation: *huai4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *waai6*

Meaning: bad, naughty, wrong, rot, deteriorate, collapse, spoil, ruin

壞 (radical 土 *tu3*, earth) means 腐壞 (*fu4 huai4* = rot/decay-turn-bad), 變壞 (*bian4 huai4* = turn-bad/astay). 壞蛋 (*huai4 dan4* = bad/rotten-egg = scoundrel) has 壞心腸 (*huai4 xin1 chang2* = bad-heart-intestines = evil heart/intentions). 細胞壞死 (*xi4 bao1 huai4 si3* = small-cell-bad-die = cells' premature death = necrosis) results in 壞腿 (*huai4 tui3* = bad/maimed-leg). Parents 教壞 (*jiao1 huai4* = teach-bad/wrong-things), so kids 學壞 (*xue2 huai4* = copy/pick-up-bad-habits). Bad son 敗壞家聲 (*bai4 huai4 jia1 sheng1* = ruins-spoils-family-reputation). 壞人 (*huai4 ren2* = bad-person) 說壞話 (*shuo1 huai4 hua4* = says-bad-words = spreads gossip/rumors/scandals), 做壞事 (*zuo4 huai4 shi4* = do-bad-things = commit follies/errors/crimes), 搞破壞 (*gao3 po4 huai4* = stir-break-ruin = create discontent/damage).

by Diana Yue