

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 Alzheimer's disease

智

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji3*

Meaning: senses, mind, sanity, intelligence, knowledge, wisdom

智 (知 *zhi1*, comprehend + 日 *ri4*, day/daily) = 理智 (*li3 zhi4* = reasoning-intelligence = sanity), 智力 (*zhi4 li4* = intellectual-ability/power), 智慧 (*zhi4 hui4* = intelligence-wisdom), 智者 (*zhi4 zhe3* = wise-person/sage) 大智若愚 (*da4 zhi4 ruo4 yu2* = great-wisdom-resembles-stupid = is wise but appears foolish/modest).

智庫 (*zhi4 ku4* = think-tank) recruits 智囊 (*zhi4 nang2* = wisdom-sack = backroom boys), 智多星 (*zhi4 duo1 xing1* = wisdom-much-star = people with smart brains). 智能手機 (*zhi4 neng2 shou3 ji1* = intelligent-ability-hand-machine) = smartphone.

失智 (*shi1 zhi4* = lose-intelligence = demented) person 心智失常 (*xin1 zhi4 shi1 chang2* = mind-senses-lose-normal = loses mind), gradually 神智不清 (*shen2 zhi4 bu4 qing1* = spirit-senses-not-clear = becomes insane).

by Diana Yue