

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 false hopes

Putonghua pronunciation: *zhi3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ji2*

Meanings: halt, stop, cease

止 = 靜止 (*jing4 zhi3* = quiet/still~stop = motionless), 停止 (*ting2 zhi3* = halt~stop). Given candy, kid 止哭 (*zhi3 ku1* = stops~crying). In music, 休止符 (*xiu1 zhi3 fu2* = rest~stop~sign) = rest.

Government 禁止 (*jin4 zhi3* = ban~stop = forbids) drug-trafficking, 制止 (*zhi4 zhi3* = controls/constrains~stops) public drug-hawking, 防止 (*fang2 zhi3* = defend~stop = prevent) drug-abuse. When patient's wound 流血不止 (*liu2 xue4 bu4 zhi3* = flow~blood~no~stop = bleeds non-stop), nurse applies bandage to 止血 (*zhi3 xue4* = stop~bleeding), prescribes pills to 止痛 (*zhi3 teng3* = stop/kill~pain).

心如止水 (*xin1 ru2 zhi2 shui3* = heart~resemble~still~water) describes person/widow who has abandoned desire/ambition. 學無止境 (*xue2 wu2 zhi3 jing4* = study~has~no~stop~territory) = Learning/knowledge is infinite/inexhaustible.