

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 breathing

呼 (radical 口 *kou3* = mouth)

Putonghua pronunciation: *hu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *foo1*

Meanings: exhale, call

呼 = 呼氣 (*hu1 qi4* = exhale~air/breath). 呼吸 (*hu1 xi1* = exhale~inhale) = breathing. 氣呼呼 (*qi4 hu1 hu1* = breath~puff~puff) describes angry expression.

呼 also means 呼喚 (*hu1 huan4* = call~beckon). Rude people 呼喝 (*hu1 he2* = call~shout). 傳呼機 (*chuan2 hu1 ji1* = convey~call~machine) = pager. Best candidate 呼聲高 (*hu1 sheng1 gao1* = call~sound~high = stands high chance). Party-makers 呼朋引類 (*hu1 peng2 yin3 lei4* = call~friends~solicit~alike/kin = call similarly-minded acquaintances), 招呼 (*zhao1 hu1* = wave~ call = greet/entertain) guests.

Peace-campaigner 登高一呼 (*deng1 gao1 yi1 hu1* = ascend~height~one~shout = makes public proclamation/rally), 呼籲 (*hu1 yu4* = call~petition = appeals/calls for) truce, wants everybody to 呼應 (*hu1 ying4* = call~answer = echo/respond).