

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 wound treatment

Putonghua pronunciation: *jiu4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gau3*

Meanings: rescue, save, redeem

救 = rescue/help/save. Troops 救援 (*jiu4 yuan2* = rescue~relieve/aid) besieged town. Firemen 救火 (*jiu4 huo3* = save~fire = take action to extinguish fire). Drowning person yells: “救命!” (*jiu4 ming4* = save~life = “Help!”) Life-guard 救人 (*jiu4 ren2* = save~people = goes to the rescue).

Surgeon performs 急救 (*ji2 jiu4* = hurry/impatient~save = first-aid/quick rescue) on accident victim: 切開傷處 (*qie1 kai1 shang1 chu4* = cuts~open~injured~area), 取出碎骨 (*qu3 chu4 sui4 gu3* = takes~out~broken~bones), 輸血 (*shu1 xue3* = supply~blood = gives blood transfusion), 縫合傷口 (*feng2 he2 shang1 kou3* = sew~together~wound~mouth = sews up cut).

Hard-hearted person 見死不救 (*jian4 si3 bu4 jiu4* = see~die~won't save = won't give help where it is desperately needed).

by Diana Yue