

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 the *nouveau-riche*

Putonghua pronunciation: *bao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *bo6*

Meanings: sudden, abrupt, violent, cruel, short-tempered, injure

暴 means sudden/powerful. 風暴 (*feng1 bao4* = wind-violent) = storm/tempest. 兇暴 (*xiong1 bao4* = fierce-violent) person uses 暴力 (*bao4 li4* = savage-strength = violence). 強暴 (*qiang2 bao4* = strong/forced-violent/bully) means cruel/rape.

暴君 (*bao4 jun1* = cruel-king/tyrant)'s 暴政 (*bao4 zheng4* = cruel-regime), 暴行 (*bao4 xing2* = cruel-acts/deeds) trigger 暴動 (*bao4 dong4* = violent-move = riots). 暴飲暴食 (*bao4 yin3 bao4 shi2* = over-eating~over-drinking) cause 暴肥 (*bao4 fei2* = rapidly-growing-fat). Anorexic patient 暴瘦 (*bao4 shou4* = rapidly~grows-thin), then 暴卒 (*bao4 zu2* = suddenly-dies).

Speculator bets on stock-market's 暴升 (*bao4 sheng1* = sudden/sharp-rise), 暴跌 (*bao4 die1* = sudden/sharp-fall). Gaining 暴利 (*bao4 li4* = huge-profit) makes him 暴發 (*bao4 fa1* = sudden-develop/boost = become rich overnight).