

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 king planning revenge



Putonghua pronunciation: *wo4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ngoh6*

Meanings: lie down

臥 is lying/sleeping posture: 睡臥 (*shui4 wo4* = sleep~lying-down), 臥床 (*wo4 chuang2* = lie-in-bed), 臥室 (*wo4 shi1* = lying-room = bedroom). 側臥 (*ze4 wo4* = side~lie) = lie on body's side. 仰臥 (*yang3 wo4* = face-up~lie) = lie on body's back. Patients 臥病 (*wo4 bing4* = lie~ill in bed).

臥軌 (*wo4 gui3* = lie-on-railway-track) is a suicidal act. 臥底 (*wo4 di3* = lie~under) = mole. 臥佛 (*wo4 fo2* = sleeping-Buddha) image shows Buddha in 涅槃 (*nie4 pan2* = "Nirvana"-transliterated).

Ancient neighboring kingdoms 吳國 (*Wu2 guo2* = Wu-kingdom), 越國 (*Yue4 guo2* = Yue-kingdom) were old enemies. Each ruler felt 坐臥不安 (*zuo4 wo4 bu4 an1* = sitting~lying~not-comfortable = thoroughly uneasy/threatened) when the other kingdom grew powerful.

by Diana Yue