

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 surgical operations

除

Putonghua pronunciation: *chu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *chue4*

Meaning: divide, remove, eliminate, except, divide

除 (radical 阝 *fu4*, left-ear radical) = 清除 (*qing1 chu2* = clean-up-remove). Gardener 除蟲 (*chu2 chong2* = removes/ extinguishes-bugs), 剷除 (*chan3 chu2* = hoes-removes) weeds. 除非 (*chu2 fei1* = remove-not) means unless. Arithmetics has 加減乘除 (*jia1 jian3 cheng2 chu2* = addition-subtraction- multiplication-division).

King 免除 (*mian3 chu2* = dismisses-removes) opponents' titles/powers, 排除 (*pai2 chu2* = dismisses-eliminates) usurper's comeback. School/boss 開除 (*kai1 chu2* = open/off-remove = sacks/discontinues) truants. Dragon-slayer 為民除害 (*wei4 min2 chu2 hai4* = for-people-remove-pest = eliminates common threat/harm).

戒毒所 (*jie4 du2 suo3* = caution/ban-poison-bureau = drug addiction treatment clinics) help addicts 戒除 (*jie4 chu2* = treat/uproot-terminate) drinking/narcotics crave. Surgeon 切除 (*qie1 chu2* = cuts-removes) tumor, 消除 (*xiao1 chu2* = annuls-allays) patient's fears.

by Diana Yue