

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 washing

Putonghua pronunciation: *rou4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yuk6*

Meanings: bathe, bath, wash

浴 = 沐浴 (*mu4 rou4* = bathe~wash). 浴室 (*rou4 shi1* = bathroom) has 浴缸 (*rou4 gang1* = bath-tank = bath-tub), 淋浴 (*lin2 rou4* = pour~bath = shower). 出浴 (*chu1 rou4* = go~bath = take bath/shower) requires 浴帽 (*rou4 mao4* = shower-cap), 浴巾 (*rou4 jin1* = bath-towel), 浴衣 (*rou4 yi1* = bath-robe).

海浴 (*hai3 rou4* = sea-bathing) is summer past-time. Patient takes 藥浴 (*yao4 rou4* = medicinal-bath). 男女同浴 (*nan2 nu3 tong2 rou4* = man~woman~same~bath = men and women sharing communal bath) is old Japanese practice.

Warriors 浴血 (*rou4 xue3* = bathe-in-blood = engage in bloody fighting). Buddhists 齋戒沐浴 (*zhai1 jie4 mu4 rou4* = fast~abstain~bathe-wash = fast and bathe) to show devotion.