

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 new-born babies

Putonghua pronunciation: *teng2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *tang4*

Meaning: sore, ache, pain, love dearly, be fond of, dote on, endear, cherish

疼 (radical 疒 *chuang2*, illness + 冬 *dong1*, winter/year-end) = ache/pain: 疼痛 (*teng2 tong4* = aching-pain), 頭疼 (*tou2 teng2* = head-ache), 骨疼 (*gu3 teng3* = bones-ache), 肌肉疼痛 (*jil rou4 teng2 tong4* = muscle-flesh-sore-pain = muscle pain).

心疼 (*xin1 teng2* = heart-ache/pain) means 心臟疼痛 (*xin1 zang4 teng2 tong4* = heart-organ-sore-pain = heart/cardiac pains, cardiologist's concern) or 疼愛 (*teng2 ai4* = ache-love = dearly love). Mom 疼子心切 (*teng2 zi3 xin1 qie4* = love-son-heart-eager = loves son dearly/keenly), nurses sick baby, drops 無關疼癢 (*wu2 guan1 teng2 yang3* = not-related-to-pain-itch = unimportant) engagements.

Maestro 疼惜 (*teng2 xi1* = loves-and-treasures) musical talent. Husband gives wife goodbye hug: “疼你!” (*teng2 ni3* = “Love-you!”)

by Diana Yue