

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 pregnancy

精

Putonghua pronunciation: *jing 1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *jing 1*

Meanings: essence, fine, sperm

精 means essence/fine: 精肉 (*jing1 rou4* = fine/lean~meat), 精英 (*jing1 ying1* = fine~flower/hero = crème de la crème/elite). Men in 精壯之年 (*jing1 zhuang4 zhi1 nian2* = fine~strong~'s-years = physical prime) have 精力 (*jing1 li4* = energy~strength). Men's 精液 (*jing1 yi4* = essence~fluid = semen) contains 精蟲 (*jing1 chong2* = essence~worms = sperms).

Sexually-roused man inserts 陽具 (*yang2 ju4* = yang/male~tool/organ = penis) into woman's 陰道 (*yin1 dao4* = yin/female~passageway = vaginal tract). Reaching 高潮 (*gao1 chao2* = high-tide = orgasm), man 射精 (*she4 jing1* = shoots/ejaculates semen/sperms), woman's 卵 (*luan3* = ovum) 受精 (*shou4 jing1* = receives~semen/sperms = is fertilized).

養精蓄銳 (*yang3 jing1 xu4 rui4* = raise~fine-soldiers~store~sharp-weapons) means conserving strength for later challenge/battle.

by Diana Yue