

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 scandals

羞

Putonghua pronunciation: *xiu1*

Cantonese pronunciation: *sau1*

Meaning: shy, embarrassed, shame, insult, humiliation

羞 (radical 丑 *chou3*, ugly/embarrassing/embarrassed) = shy/shameful feeling. Children are 羞澀 (*xiu1 se4* = shy-immature/awkward = shy), 羞怯 (*xiu1 qie4* = shyly-timidly) before strangers, 害羞 (*hai4 xiu1* = ill/contract-shyness) = Cantonese 怕醜 (*pa4 chou3* = Cantonese *pa3 chau2* = fear-ugly/embarrassed) = feel shy. Prodigal son 羞慚 (*xiu1 chan2* = abashed-ashamed = feels shameful), Pharisees 羞辱 (*xiu1 ru3* = shame-insult) sinner, 羞與為伍 (*xiu1 yu3 wei3 wu3* = embarrassed-with-be-company = are ashamed of his company).

Tabloid says VIP involved in 醜聞 (*chou3 wen2* = ugly-news = dirty scandal) 不知羞恥 (*bu1 zhi1 xiu1 chi3* = not-know/understand-embarrassment-shame = has no sense of shame), VIP 老羞成怒 (*lao3 xiu1 cheng2 nu4* = old/extreme-shame-become-anger = badly shamed/offended, gets angry).

by Diana Yue