

Character Builder 您好學？

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 hospitalization



Putonghua pronunciation: *he2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *hap6*

Meaning: join, combine, close, unite, merge, together, sharing

合 (radical 口 *kou3*, mouth) means 合而為一 (*he2 er2 wei4 yi1* = join/unite-and-become-one). Door 開合 (*kai1 he2* = opens-closes). Couple 合力 (*he2 li4* = join-efforts-to) raise family, 合葬 (*he2 zang4* = together-share-burial-grave). 合唱團 (*he2 chang4 tuan2* = together-sing-group) = choir/chorus. 聯合國 (*lian2 he2 guo2* = link-join-states) = the United Nations.

Partners sign 合作合約 (*he2 zuo2 he2 yue4* = co-operate-joint-agreement = collaboration contract). Court verdict 合法合理 (*he2 fa3 he2 li3* = conforms-to-law-conforms-to-reason = is legal, reasonable).

Transplanted organ 適合 (*shi1 he2* = fits-suits) patient. Medication 配合 (*pei4 he2* = matched-with) physiotherapy help incision 癒合 (*yü4 he2* = heal-mend/close). Recovery progress 符合 (*fu2 he2* = seal-match = meets) expectation.

by Diana Yue