

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

抱

Putonghua pronunciation: *bao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *po5*

Meaning: hold in both arms, arm's embrace, carry, encircle, hug, cherish, give birth to, adopt

抱 (radical 扌 = hand/arm) means hold/embrace/encircle.

Lovers 擁抱 (*yong1 bo4* = hold/hug-each-other-in-embrace),

Nurse 抱起 (*bao4 qi3* = holds-up) baby, puts it in mom's 懷抱

(*huai2 bao4* = arm's-embrace). Orphanage encourages 抱養

(*bao4 yang3* = carry-breed/raise = child adoption),

Sea 環抱 (*huan2 bao4* = circle-embrace = encircles) island.

Hero has 抱負 (*bao4 fu4* = cherished-aims/ambitions). Weak

team 抱蛋 (*bao4 dan4* = carry-egg = scores zero/nil). Boss 抱怨

(*bao4 yuan4* = carries/expresses-grudge).

Grandparents 抱病 (*bao4 bing4* = have-illness), desire 抱孫

(*bao4 sun1* = holding-grandchild = grandchild's arrival), wish 新

抱 (*xin1 bao4* = Cantonese term *san1 po5* = newly-embraced =

daughter-in-law) can 三年兩抱 (*san1 lian2 liang3 bao4* = three-

years-two-carry = have two babies in three years).

by Diana Yue